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THE

REFORMED PASTOR;

SHOWING

THE NATURE

OF

THE PASTORAL WORK.

BY THAT EMINENT AND FAITHFUL MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST, THE

REV. RICHARD BAXTER.

ABRIDGED BY

THOMAS RUTHERFORD.

Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.—*Luke.*

They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.—*Daniel.*

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO

THE REFORMED PASTOR.

BY THE EDITOR.

I HOPE my dear brethren in the ministry will excuse me for taking the liberty of earnestly recommending to their serious attention and careful perusal, the following tract. I intend it more especially for the younger preachers in the Methodist connection: those who, comparatively, have been but a short time in the work, and those who from year to year are entering into the Lord's vineyard; though I am certain that there is not a preacher in the connection, nor a minister in Britain, of any denomination, whatever his learning, his abilities, or his rank and standing in the church may be, but has need to attend to it, and may derive much benefit from it. Above thirty years ago, a very respectable and aged minister of the Church of Scotland, in the neighbourhood of Perth, told me, that he knew no minister who could read *Baxter's Reformed Pastor* without being covered with shame and confusion, except Mr. Wesley.

The pious and venerable author of this book shows what sort of men ministers ought to be, in spirit, in conversation, in life, and doctrine; the greatness of the work which they have to do, and how every part of it must be performed: and this he does in such a pointed and convincing manner, that it is hardly possible for any to read it, who are at all sensible of the importance of the ministerial character and work, without being roused and quickened to greater zeal and diligence. In many parts the language is most searching and powerful; it pierces and cuts like a

two-edged sword: so that he who does not feel it, and sensibly too, must be almost past feeling. And yet he does not overrate the work. No; it is as extensive, as various, as necessary, and as important in every respect, as he represents it. Indeed, its importance cannot be told; it far exceeds all human comprehension. The man is yet unborn who duly considers the worth of immortal souls. He only knows their worth who bought them with his blood.

The real excellence of this book recommends it to every man's conscience in the sight of God; and in my humble opinion is such, that every minister, and in particular every Methodist preacher, ought to make it a kind of pocket companion, to read it frequently, examine himself by it, and endeavour to live, preach, and labour for the salvation of souls as it directs. Were we to do so, what zealous, faithful, and indefatigable men should we be. Our profiting and our usefulness would appear unto all: for we should bestir ourselves in another manner, and do much more for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the increase of religion among our people, than, in general, we do. Brethren, lay your hand upon your heart, and ask yourselves, as in the presence of God, Is not all this necessary? Is it not what we are called (yea, engaged) to do? And ought not we, in the name and strength of the Lord, to strive by every means, and in every possible way, to promote this work? Ought we not to be instant in season and out of season? Yea, ought we not to spend and be spent therein, seeing that we publicly profess that our business is to save all the souls we can? "You have nothing to do but save souls: therefore spend and be spent in this work. Observe, it is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care merely of this or that society, but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many lost sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness, without which they cannot see the Lord."

But besides the intrinsic excellence of this treatise, it is peculiarly necessary for ministers, and particularly for those in our connection at this time, for several reasons.

I. Many are very active in spreading infidelity, turning the blessed word of God and the sacred work of the ministry into matter of ridicule; representing the one as a cunningly devised fable, and the other as mere priestcraft, designed only to shackle and impose upon the people. And others, with a great deal of art and plausibility, are no less zealous in propagating doctrines, which, if not immediately connected with infidelity, yet by direct and easy steps lead to it; and, to say the least of them, they totally sap the foundations of genuine and vital Christianity. I mean Arianism and Socinianism. Hence the essential doctrines of the Gospel, viz., the doctrine of the holy and ever blessed Trinity, the universal and total depravity of human nature, the great and glorious work of atonement by Jesus Christ, justification by faith, and the whole work of the Spirit in the soul, are represented as the corruptions of Christianity. But if we must give up all these as corruptions, I should be glad to know what of Christianity we shall retain: in my opinion, nothing that deserves the name.

II. There is a species of refined and bewitching Antinomianism preached by some, which has a direct and powerful tendency to mislead and insnare those who hear it, leading them to believe that they must necessarily sin; or, which is the same, that they cannot avoid committing sin, and being sometimes overcome by it; that sin will do them little harm: and therefore it leads them to be at ease in their sins, crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Or, if they have religion, it makes them content with very low attainments; effectually keeping them from forgetting the things which are behind, reaching forth unto those things which are before, and pressing towards the mark for the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The preachers of this stamp preach almost exclusively to believers; and a great part of what they say to them is to tell them how safe they are; yea, that they are as safe, though not as happy, as the saints in heaven. They may fall,—to be sure they may fall as foully as Peter, or even David: but what then? It is tacitly intimated that such falls can do them no real injury; because, however egregiously they may fall, they cannot be lost, but shall rise again, and praise God louder in heaven for their falls. They say little on the subject of Christian duties: seldom, and in a very vague and superficial manner, exhort believers to "be zealous of good works, to watch and pray always, to deny themselves, to take up their cross daily, and follow Christ; to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, by adding to their faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity." These savour too much of legality, and working for life, of which they are dreadfully afraid. On the contrary, they insinuate (or perhaps tell them in plain English) that their salvation is finished, that Christ has done all, and that all, or at least the principal part, of what they are called to, is to believe that they have *nothing* to do.

This is a most dangerous and flesh-pleasing gospel, and wherever it is preached, cannot fail of being attended with the most fatal consequences to those who sit under such a siren song, and believe what they hear: for it says more to encourage sin, and to make men be at ease in their sins, than to promote holiness. Hence, while it pretends, and, in words, appears to exalt and honour Christ, it in fact rejects him, crucifies him afresh, and puts him to open shame.

Some time ago, being peculiarly situated, I heard a popular preacher of this sort for several weeks, always once, and sometimes twice a week, who uniformly preached in the manner I have described. His hearers, both on the Sabbath and week-day evenings, were numerous and genteel; and, without any violation of charity, there was too much reason to fear

that, in matters of religion, many of them did not know their right hand from their left. Notwithstanding, he scarce ever dropped a word to unawakened and impenitent sinners, unless sometimes a sentence or two at the close of his discourse, telling them what a miserable state they were in. But all the times I heard him, he never once set life and death before them; never told them how to escape the wrath to come, and how to be saved; never explained the nature of repentance, nor exhorted them to repent; never showed them how to come to Christ; nor inferred the necessity of the new birth. In short, he preached as if he had no message to impenitent sinners, and therefore had nothing to do with the unconverted. I confess I was astonished at the strain and manner in which he preached, and could not help both thinking and saying,—This is another gospel—this is not the way in which the prophets, our blessed Lord, and his apostles preached. The prophets cried to sinners, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die? Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Our Lord warned sinners to "flee from the wrath to come," called them to "repent and believe the gospel," and exhorted them to "strive to enter in at the strait gate;" to "ask, seek, knock;" to "watch and pray always;" to "be importunate with God;" yea, to "take the kingdom of heaven by force;" to "labour for the meat which endureth to eternal life;" and to "deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow him, without which they could not be his disciples." He told them again and again, that "except they were converted, and became as little children, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and that "they must be born again." St. Paul was sent to the "Gentiles to open their eyes, and to turn them from

darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith which is in Christ Jesus." To Jews and Gentiles he preached "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, with prayers and tears, both night and day." He faithfully testified to sinners of every description, "There is no respect of persons with God. He will render to every man according to his deeds. To them that seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but to them who are contentious, and obey not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul that doeth evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." He cried aloud, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Awake, thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. Awake to righteousness, and sin not. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, he persuaded men" to repent and turn from their sins, and prepare to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. And as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus, to whom was "committed the ministry of reconciliation," in his name, and in his stead, he "besought sinners to be reconciled unto God," and "travailed in birth for them till Christ was formed in them." How different is this preaching from that mentioned above, and what different effects it is calculated to produce!

III. There is a kind of modish, superficial, pointless preaching, practised by some, which I fear several of our young preachers are in danger of falling into. This preaching is, for the most part, sensible, pretty, and not foreign to the subject in hand; neither is it mere morality, but has a tincture of the gospel; yea, in general, it contains the truth, but not the whole

truth; not the truth in its native and proper dress, nor directed and applied as it ought to be, to its grand and proper end. It is defective in the following respects:

1. It wants depth, weight, spirituality, and point. There is, comparatively, little in it for solid and useful instruction; and almost nothing to awaken, fasten upon, and affect the hearers. It passes away as a tale that is told, or as water spilt on the ground, and leaves them dull and unmoved. Though many may be pleased with it, and highly applaud it as excellent preaching, (for many love smooth things,) yet the more judicious and spiritual part of the hearers look up, and are not fed. They find it to be light food. It does not nourish, comfort, and strengthen their souls.

2. It wants more of the spirit and marrow of the gospel; more of Christ and the Holy Ghost. He is not clearly, strongly, and constantly exhibited as the only foundation and end of all our hopes—the Alpha and the Omega—the all in all: nor his Spirit, as that divine agent who alone works in us all that is good, all that is holy and well pleasing in the sight of God, and who disposes and enables us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. And that preaching which does not *freely* and *fully* dispense the bread of life, must necessarily, so far, be attended with barrenness, leanness, and death.

3. It is not sufficiently close and practical. The preachers of this stamp study their sermons without studying the people to whom they are to preach them. Hence their preaching, though good in the main, is not suited to the tastes and wants of their hearers. They either speak of things at a distance, or else in such a way that the people do not feel themselves much interested in what is delivered. Their words do not come home, do not reach the hearts and consciences of those to whom they speak; but fall, like pointless arrows, short of the mark.

The chief causes of this sort of preaching are, (1.) Want of simplicity. (2.) A desire of popularity; to

be thought fine, or great preachers, and rather to please than profit. (3.) The want of a proper sense of the greatness and design of the work of the ministry; which is for the sole purpose of bringing lost sinners to Christ, building them up in faith and love, and assisting them to get safe to heaven. Let a preacher only have his mind deeply impressed with the value of immortal souls, their miserable and alarming state, and that he is appointed by the Lord a watchman and a shepherd, to warn them of their danger, gather them unto the fold of the Lord Jesus, and lead and feed them according as he hath directed in his holy word which, if he neglect to do, and they perish through his negligence, their blood will be required at his hand; I say, let him only feel these things as he ought, and he will no longer continue a superficial, smooth, and easy preacher; but will quickly become serious, deep, lively, and spiritual—a man of weight and fire. (4.) The state of discipline in the Christian church. This has seldom, if ever, been more neglected than it is in the present day, by almost every denomination of professing Christians. Whoever will be at the pains to compare the discipline enjoined by our Lord, and exercised by his apostles and their successors for four hundred years; as also that which Mr. Baxter so strenuously enforces in the following treatise, and which he and others exercised in their several parishes and congregations; I say, whoever will compare these with the discipline which is at present in use, must see, in the most clear and convincing light, what a low and neglected state it is in, and how very little care is taken to purge and keep clean the floor of Christ. Among many, there is scarce a shred of what can properly be called discipline maintained. Chapels are built, various ministers are appointed to preach in those chapels, persons take seats and so become stated hearers, and then receive a note or token to admit them to the Lord's supper. This, if I am not mistaken, is most of the discipline that is observed by many. How few take care

to know all their flock, that they may take heed to them all, and give unto each his portion in due season. How little is done in the way of catechising, personal instruction, and teaching from house to house; at least, in that spirit and manner in which it must be done, in order to answer the great purposes for which it is intended. How few in that respect are instant in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with all long suffering and doctrine. How frequently do we suffer sin in our brother; and how seldom are those who sin openly, rebuked before all, that others also may fear. Surely the Lord may justly take up the same complaint against many of us which he did against the shepherds of Israel in the days of the prophet Ezekiel, saying, "Ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened; neither have ye healed that which was sick; neither have ye bound up that which was broken; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away; neither have ye sought that which was lost." It is to be feared that many hardly consider discipline as any part of the ministerial work; whereas it is plain from the word of God, that it is a most necessary and important part of the work of every one who has the care of souls; without which their public preaching, however excellent, will avail comparatively little, especially towards promoting deep and permanent godliness.

My dear brethren, must not we plead guilty in this matter? Our economy is admirably calculated to separate the precious from the vile, and for preserving our societies pure. Indeed, if preachers and leaders did but unitedly and steadily maintain our rules of discipline, no person who does not walk as becomes the gospel could continue a member of our society. But, alas, have we not suffered the hedge in parts to be broken down, and even trodden under foot? Is not this evil increasing among us? I know many, both preachers and people, see and deplore it; but what is done to prevent and cure it? It would be easy to descend to particulars; but to *you* this is un-

necessary. To be fully convinced of the sin which, in this respect, lieth at our door, we need only read over our General Minutes, which contain the form of discipline established among us, and which every preacher, on his being received into full connection, solemnly and publicly engages to maintain.

For these reasons, as well as others that might be adduced, the following tract is highly necessary for ministers at this time; and, if properly attended to, will, by the divine blessing, effectually preserve them from all the above evils. If they practise what in the most plain and forcible manner they are therein taught, they will be preserved from every species of infidelity: for they will heartily believe and love the holy Scriptures, which will be to them sweeter than honey or the honeycomb, and more precious than gold and rubies. The word of the Lord will dwell in them richly; they will hide it in their heart, that they may not sin against him; and from that inexhaustible treasure bring forth, both in their public preaching and private instructions, what will preserve and establish others in the truth. They will be preserved from Arianism and Socinianism; for they will believe, and feel, and teach the first and fundamental principles of the doctrine of Christ. They will particularly insist on the supreme and essential divinity of the Lord Jesus, the depravity of human nature, the doctrine of atonement by the vicarious sacrifice of the Redeemer, repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the renewal of the soul in righteousness and true holiness, by the inspiration and power of the Holy Ghost. They will be preserved from Antinomianism, both in theory and practice; for they will see that Christ is not only a Redeemer and a Saviour, a Prophet, and an atoning High-Priest; but also a King, a Lawgiver, and a righteous Judge; and that he hath given them his law, hath delivered unto them a holy commandment, which he requires, and will enable them to fulfil; and that it is the doers of the law, and not the hearers only, that shall be finally

justified. Hence, says our blessed Lord, "He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened to a wise man who built his house upon a rock; and he that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand." Thus we see, whatever Antinomians may teach, according to the plain words of Him who is the "faithful and true Witness," that *hearing* his sayings, and *doing* them, *is building on a rock;* and *hearing* his sayings, and *not doing* them, *is building on the sand.* They will not be smooth, flimsy, and superficial preachers; but serious, earnest, and weighty. They will feel what they say, and their great concern and constant endeavour will be to make those that hear them understand and feel it also. In a word, they will declare the whole counsel of God, not only by public preaching, but also by personal instruction, and teaching from house to house; laying themselves out in every possible way to be useful to those over whom they are appointed, and for whose souls they watch as they that must give an account. If they cannot do all they would, they will strive to do all they can, that they may be clear of the blood of all men.

Now, my brethren, a book which is thus calculated to guard us against so many dangerous extremes on the right hand and on the left, and to stir us up to zeal, diligence, and fidelity, in the great work of saving our own souls, and those that hear us—the most important work under the sun; certainly such a book is worthy of our most careful and serious attention.

But, added to all these reasons, there is one in particular which strongly recommends it to the preachers in our connection. A very important part of our form of discipline, which we all have engaged before God, angels, and men, to maintain among our people, and that with all our might, is taken verbatim from this book. See Gen. Min., p. 26, § 17. On visiting and instructing the people from house to house. And

Mr. Wesley's works, vol. xv, p. 284; where he introduces it thus:—

"1. Personal religion, either towards God or men, is amazingly superficial among us. How little faith is there among us; how little communion with God; how little living in heaven, walking in eternity, deadness to every creature! How much love of the world, desire of pleasure, of ease, of praise, of getting money! How little brotherly love; what continual judging one another; what gossiping, evil speaking, tale-bearing; what want of moral honesty! Who does as he would be done by in buying and selling, particularly in selling horses?

"2. Family religion is shamefully wanting, and almost in every branch. And our people in general will be little better, till we take quite another course with them. For what avails public preaching alone, though we could preach like angels? We must therefore instruct them from house to house. Till this is done, and that in good earnest, the Methodists will be little better than other people.

"Can we find a better method of doing this than Mr. Baxter's? If not, let us adopt it without delay. His whole tract, entitled *Gildas Salvianus*, is well worth a careful perusal. A short extract from it I here subjoin. Speaking of this visiting from house to house, (p. 351,) he says, 'We shall find many difficulties, both in ourselves, and in the people,'" &c., &c.

Thus, my brethren, we, in particular, are under very strong and solemn obligations, not only to peruse, but diligently and faithfully to practise a most important part of what the pious author chiefly insists upon in this work.

I have been led as follows to abridge it. About four months ago a friend lent me Dr. Smith on the sacred office, with which I was much pleased; and as he repeatedly quotes Baxter's *Reformed Pastor*, I determined to read it over again, which accordingly I did as soon as I had finished the other, and was so struck with its excellence and vast importance, that I

thought it was a great pity such a treasure of necessary and useful instruction should be so little known. Therefore, after reading it through with particular care, I immediately began to abridge it, hoping that it might, by the blessing of God, be the means of stirring up some, at least, to greater zeal and diligence in the work of the ministry, and of promoting vital and practical godliness both among preachers and people. I had only gone over a few pages, when I mentioned what I had done and intended to do, to a worthy and sensible friend, who highly approved of the design, and kindly offered to take the printing of it upon himself. Thus encouraged, I cheerfully proceeded in my work.

I was also the more desirous to do something in this way, because, in consequence of a severe rheumatic fever which confined me to my bed for near five weeks, and a succession of ill health ever since, I have for many months been quite incapable of any public work. All I can do is to read and write a little. Hence I thought if I could be instrumental in getting this book reprinted, and more generally read, I might thereby serve the cause of my blessed Lord and Master, for whom I would fain be doing something as long as I live. I love his cause, his people, and his work: and it is my grief and shame that I have done so little for him, and served him so unfaithfully when I had health and strength.

My dear brethren, though I have presumed, in this advertisement, to act the part of a monitor to you, yet I can assure you that I put myself in the front of those who have the greatest cause to be ashamed and humbled before the Lord, for negligence and unfaithfulness in his work: for I know none in the connection so guilty as myself. But this will not excuse you. Nay, rather let it provoke you to double your diligence, and lay out all your strength, time, and talents for God. I believe when we come to the end of our race, we shall wish we had done more; and shall see that, in many respects, we might have done

more for the glory of God and the salvation of souls than we have.

For near two months, I have employed as much of my time every day in preparing this work for the press as my strength would permit; and sometimes I believe I have done more than I ought. It has been to me very pleasant work, and, I hope, profitable. Sometimes the delight I have felt in it has made me forget my pain and weakness; and, at other times, they have been so great as to oblige me to lay it aside. Indeed, my weakness at present is inexpressible: I seem, from day to day, like one suspended between life and death; and which scale will preponderate, the Lord only knows. His will be done! Health or sickness, strength or weakness, ease or pain, life or death, is welcome—if I may but glorify and enjoy him.

> "All is one to me, so I
> In my Lord may live and die!"

I have endeavoured to abridge this book as a dying man, thinking it is not improbable that it may be the last work I shall ever do for the church below.* I have therefore done it as with God, death, eternity, and immortal souls before my eyes, and with many prayers, and some tears. O, that the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls may accompany it with his abundant blessing to all who read it, and especially to those for whom it is chiefly intended!

I have taken much pains in order to make it as correct as I possibly could. Some, perhaps, will think that I have left out too much; but I apprehend the majority will think that I have retained more than is either altogether suitable or necessary. I confess there are some parts that do not immediately suit us; but, nevertheless, they show in such a striking manner the spirit of the author, and how much his heart

* And so it was; for in about one month after preparing this work for the press, he gently sunk into the arms of his Lord, in the fifty-first year of his age.

was enlarged and set upon the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and do also contain so much useful information how to deal with persons of different dispositions, states, sentiments, and characters, in order, if possible, to pluck them as brands from the burning, and make them wise unto salvation, that I thought, in justice both to the original author and the reader, they ought to be preserved. T. R.

PREFACE

TO

THE REFORMED PASTOR.

To my Reverend and dearly beloved Brethren, the faithful Ministers of Christ in Britain and Ireland, Grace and Peace in Jesus Christ be increased.

Reverend Brethren,—The subject of this treatise so nearly concerns yourselves, and the churches committed to your care, that it imboldens me thus to address you, notwithstanding its imperfections, and the consciousness that I am unworthy to be your monitor. I shall first give you some account of the reasons of the work, and the freedom of speech I have used, which to some may be displeasing.

When the Lord had awakened his ministers in this county, and some neighbouring parts, to a sense of their duty in the work of catechising, and privately instructing all in their parishes who did not obstinately refuse their help; and when they had subscribed an agreement containing their resolutions for the future performance of it, they judged it improper to enter upon the work without solemnly humbling their souls before the Lord, for their long neglect of so great and necessary a duty: and therefore they agreed to meet together at Worcester, Dec. 4, 1655, and there to join in humiliation and earnest prayer to God for the pardon of their sins, for his special assistance in the work they have undertaken, and for the success of it with the people whom they were engaged to instruct: at which time I, with some others, was desired by them to preach. In answer to their desires I prepared the following discourse; which, though it proved longer than could be delivered in one or two sermons, yet I intended to have entered upon it at that time, and to have delivered that which was most pertinent

to the occasion, and reserved the rest to another season. But before the meeting, by the increase of pain and weakness, I was disabled from going. To recompense which, I yielded to the requests of divers of the brethren, to publish the things which I had prepared, that they might *see* what they could not *hear*.

If now it be objected, "That I should not have spoken so plainly or sharply against the sins of the ministry, or that I should not have published it to the view of the world; or at least that I should have done it in another tongue, and not in the ears of the vulgar, especially at a time when many are endeavouring to bring the ministry into contempt, and the people are too prone to hearken to their suggestions;" I confess I thought the objection very considerable: but it did not alter my resolution, for the following reasons:—(1.) It was a public solemn humiliation that we had agreed on, and that this was prepared and intended for: and how could we be humbled without a plain confession of our sin? (2.) It was principally our *own* sins that the confession concerned; and who can be offended with us for confessing them, and taking the blame and shame to ourselves, which our consciences told us we ought to do? (3.) I have excepted in our confessions those that are not guilty; and therefore hope I have injured none. (4.) Having necessarily prepared it in the English tongue, I had no time to translate it. (5.) Where the sin is open in the sight of the world, it is in vain to attempt to hide it. (6.) And such attempts do but aggravate it, and increase our shame. (7.) A free confession is a condition of a full remission; and when the sin is public, the confession must be public. If the ministers of England had sinned only in Latin, I would have made shift to have admonished them in Latin, or else have said nothing to them. But if they will sin in English, they must hear of it in English. Unpardoned sin will never let us rest nor prosper, though we be at ever so much care and cost to cover

it. Our sin will surely find us out, though we find not it. The work of confession is purposely to make known our sin, and freely to take the shame to ourselves: and if he that confesseth and forsaketh it be the man that shall have mercy, no wonder then if he that covereth it prosper not. (Prov. xxviii, 13.) If we be so tender of ourselves, and so loath to confess, God will be the less tender of us, and he will indite our confessions for us. He will either force our consciences to confession, or his judgments shall proclaim our iniquities to the world: but if we judge ourselves, he will not judge us. (8.) The fire is already kindled which revealeth our sin: judgment is begun at the house of God. Have ministers suffered nothing in England, Scotland, and Ireland; and have there been no attempts for their overthrow? Was it not put to the vote in an assembly, which some called a Parliament of England, whether the whole frame of the established ministry and its legal maintenance should be taken down? And were we not put to plead our title to that maintenance, as if we had been falling into the hands of Turks, who thirsted for our subversion, as determined enemies to the Christian cause? And who does not know that many of these men are still alive, and how high the same spirit is, and busily contriving the accomplishment of the same design? Shall we think that they have ceased their enterprise, because they are working more subtly in the dark? It is no time now to stand upon our credit, so as to neglect our duty, befriend our sins, and provoke the Lord against us. It rather becomes us to fall down at the feet of our offended Lord, to justify him in his judgments, and freely and penitently to confess our transgressions, and to resolve upon a speedy and thorough reformation, before wrath break forth upon us. It is time to make up all breaches between us and heaven, when we stand in such necessity of the divine protection: for how can an impenitent, unreformed people expect to be sheltered by holiness itself? (9.) The world already knows that we are *sinners*;

and is it not highly necessary they should see that we are *penitent* sinners? As repentance is necessary to the recovery of our peace with God, so is it also to the reparation of our credit with wise and godly men. Befriending and excusing our sin, is our shame, and leads towards everlasting shame; which penitent confession will prevent. (10.) Our penitent confession and speedy reformation are the means that must silence the reproaching adversaries. He is impudently inhuman that will reproach those for their sins, who bewail, and penitently charge them upon themselves. Such men have a promise of pardon from God; and who dare condemn us, when God doth justify us? Who shall lay that to our charge, which God hath declared that he will not charge us with? (11.) The leaders of the flock must be examples to the rest, in this as well as in other duties. It is not our part only to teach them repentance, but to go before them in the exercise of it. As far as we excel them in knowledge and other gifts, so far should we also excel them in this and other graces. (12.) Too many who have set their hand to this sacred work, are, notwithstanding, still addicted to self-seeking, negligence, pride, and other sins; so that it is our duty to admonish them. To give them up as incurable, were cruel, as long as there are other means to be used. We must not hate them, but plainly rebuke them, and not suffer sin upon them, (Lev. xix. 17.) To bear with the vices of the ministers, is to promote the ruin of the church. For what more speedy way is there to deprave and undo the people, than the depravity of their guides? And how can we more effectually farther a reformation, than by endeavouring to reform the leaders of the church? Surely, brethren, if it be our duty to endeavour to cast out those ministers that are negligent, scandalous, and unfit for the work, it must be our duty to endeavour to heal the sins of others, and to use a much gentler remedy to them that are less guilty. If other men's sins deserve an ejection, surely ours deserve and require plain reproof.

For my part, I have done as I would be done by. It is for God and the safety of the church, and in tender love to the brethren whom I have ventured to reprehend: not to make them contemptible and odious, but to heal the evils that would make them so; that no enemy may find this matter of reproach among us. But especially because our faithful endeavours are so necessary to the welfare of the church, and the salvation of souls; that it is not consistent with love to either, to be negligent ourselves, or silently to connive at, and comply with the negligent. If thousands of you were in a leaky ship, and those that should pump the water and stop the leaks, should be sporting or asleep; yea, or but favour themselves in their labours, so as to the hazard of you all, would you not rouse them to their work, and call upon them to labour as for your lives? And suppose you used some sharpness and importunity with the slothful, would you think that man in his wits that would take it ill, and accuse you of pride, self-conceit, or rudeness, for presuming to talk so to your fellow workmen, or who told you that you wronged him by diminishing his reputation? Would you not say, "The work must be done, or we are all dead men: the ship is ready to sink, and do you talk of reputation? or had you rather hazard yourself and us, than hear of your slothfulness?" This is our case, brethren. The work of God must be done; souls must not perish while you mind your worldly business, and take your ease, or quarrel with your brethren: nor must we be silent while men are hastened by you to perdition, and the church to greater danger and confusion, for fear of seeming uncivil with you, or displeasing your impatient souls. Would you be but as impatient with your sins as with reproof, you should hear no more from us. But neither God nor good men will let you alone in your sins. If you had engaged in some other calling, we should not, perhaps, have had so much necessity for molesting you: but as you have entered into the office which is for the preservation

of us all, so that by letting you alone in your sin we must give up the church to apparent loss and hazard; blame us not if we talk to you more freely than you would have us do. If your own body be sick, and you will despise the remedy; or if your own house be on fire, and you will be singing or quarrelling in the streets; I can possibly bear it and let you alone, which yet in charity I should not easily do. But if you will undertake to be the physician of a hospital, or to all the town that is infected with the plague, or will undertake to quench all the fires that shall be kindled in the town, there is no bearing with your remissness, how much soever it may displease you. Take it how you will, you must be told of it; and if that will not serve, you must be yet more closely told of it; and if that will not serve, if you be rejected as well as reprehended, you must thank yourselves. I speak all this to none but the guilty. And thus I have given you those reasons which forced me, even in plain English, to publish so much of the sins of the ministry, as in the following treatise I have done. And I suppose the more penitent and humble any are, and the more desirous of the truest reformation of the church, the more easily and fully will they approve such free confessions and reprehensions.

The second sort of objections against this free confession of sin, I expect to hear from the parties whose sins are confessed. Most of them are willing that others be blamed, so they be justified. I can truly say, that what I have here spoken hath been as impartially as I could, and not as a party, nor as siding with any; but as owning the common Christian cause, as sensible of the apparent wrongs that have been offered to common truth and godliness, and the hinderances of men's salvation, and of the happiness of the church. But I find it impossible to avoid offending guilty men: for there is no way of avoiding it but by our silence or their patience: and silent we cannot be, because of God's commands; and patient they cannot be, because of their guilt and partiality.

I still except those humble men, who are willing to know the worst of themselves, love the light that their deeds may be made manifest, and long to know their sins that they may forsake them, and their duty that they may perform it.

Some, it is likely, will be offended with me, that I blame them so much for the neglect of that discipline, which they have so long disputed for. But what remedy? If discipline were not of God, if it were unnecessary to the church, or if it were enough to dispute for duty, while we deliberately refuse to perform it—then would I have given these brethren no offence.

Another sort that will be offended with me are some of the divines, of the prelatical way, whom I had no mind to offend, nor to dishonour. But, if necessary duty will do it, what remedy? If they cannot bear with just admonition, I must bear with their impatience. But I must tell them, that I speak not by hearsay, but from sight and feeling. It is more tolerable in an Englishman to speak such things, who has seen the sad work which was made in England—the silencing of most godly, able men, the persecution even of the peaceable, the discountenance of godliness, and the insulting scorn of the most profane in the land—than for a foreigner, who hath known of this but by hearsay. When we remember what sort of ministers the land abounded with, while the ablest and most diligent men were cast out, (of which matters we cannot be ignorant, if there were no records remaining of their attested accusations,) we must needs take leave to tell the world, that the souls of men and the welfare of the church were not so contemptible in our eyes, as that we should have no sense of these things, or should manifest no dislike of them, nor once invite the guilty to repent.

Perhaps some will say, "that the matter is not much amended, when, in former times, we were almost all of a mind; and now we have so many religions, that we know not well whether we have any at all." *Ans.*

(1.) Every different opinion is not another religion. (2.) This is the common popish argument against reformation; as if it were better that men believed nothing *fide divina*, than inquire after truth for fear of misbelief; and, as if they would have all ungodly, that they might be all of a mind. I am sure that most of the people in England wherever I came, made religion, and the reading of Scripture, or speaking of the way to heaven, the matter of their bitter scorn and reproach. And would you have us all of that mind again, for fear of differences? A charitable wish! (3.) If others run into the other extreme, will that be any excuse to you? Christ's church hath always suffered between profane unbelievers and heretical dividers, as he suffered himself on the cross between two thieves. And will the sin of one excuse the other? (4.) And yet I must say, (lest I be impiously blind and ungrateful,) that through the great mercy of God, the matter is so far amended, that many hundred drunken, swearing, ignorant, negligent, scandalous ministers are cast out; and we have many humble, godly, painful teachers in a county, for a few that we had before. This is so visibly true, that when the godly are feasted, who formerly were almost famished, and beaten for going abroad to beg their bread, you can hardly by all your arguments or rhetoric persuade them that the times are no better with them than they were; though men of another nation may possibly believe you in such reports. I bless God for the change that I see in this country, and among the people, even in my own charge, which is such as will not permit me to believe that the case is as bad with them as formerly it hath been.

It is the sinful unhappiness of some men's minds, that they can hardly think well of the best words or ways of those whom they disaffect; and they usually disaffect those that cross them in their corrupt proceedings, and plainly tell them of their faults. They are ready to judge of the reprover's spirit by their own, and to think that all such sharp reproofs proceed

from some disaffection to their persons, or partial opposition to the opinions which they hold; and therefore they will seldom regard the reproofs of any but those of their own party, who will seldom deal plainly with them, because they are of their party. But plain dealers are always approved in the end; and the time is at hand when you shall confess that those were your truest friends. He that will deal plainly against your sins, in uprightness and honesty, will deal as plainly for you against the sins of any that would injure you: for he speaks not against sin, because it is *yours*, but because it is *sin*. It is an observable passage that is reported by many, and printed by one, how the late King Charles, (who, by the bishops' instigation had kept Mr. Prin so long in prison, and twice cropped his ears for writing against their masks and plays, and the high and hard proceedings of the prelates,) when he read his notable voluminous speech for an acceptance of the king's concessions, and an agreement with him thereupon, did, not long before his death, deliver the book to a friend that stood by him, saying, "Take this book; I give it thee as a legacy: and, believe it, this gentleman is the Cato of the age." The time will come, when plain dealing will have a better construction than it hath while prejudice doth turn the heart against it.

I shall insist no longer on the apologetical part: the title of the book itself is apologetical. I do not pretend to the sapience of *Gildas*, nor the sanctity of *Salvian*, as to the degree; but by their names I offer you an excuse for plain dealing. If it was used in a much greater measure by men so wise and holy as they were, why should it not, in a lower measure, be allowed in me? At least, I have this encouragement, that the plain dealing of Gildas and Salvian being so much approved by us, now they are dead, how much soever they might be despised or hated while living by those they reproved, I may expect some such success in future times.*

* Whatever apology this book might require when it was first

I must now, brethren, become your monitor concerning some of the necessary duties of which I have spoken in the ensuing discourse. If any of you should charge me with arrogance or immodesty for this attempt, as if hereby I accused you of negligence, or judged myself sufficient to admonish you; I can assure you that herein I displease myself as much as I do you; and had rather have the ease and peace of silence, if it were consistent with duty and the churches' good. But it is the mere necessity of the souls of men, my desire of their salvation, and the prosperity of the church, which force me to this arrogance and immodesty, if it must be so called. For who that hath a tongue can be silent, when it is for the honour of God, the welfare of his church, and the everlasting happiness of thousands and tens of thousands?

And the *first* and main matter which I have to propound to you is, Whether it be not the unquestionable duty of the generality of ministers in these three nations to set themselves presently to the work of catechising, and personally instructing, all that are taught by them, who will submit to it? Can you think that holy wisdom will gainsay it? Will zeal for God, delight in his service, or love to the souls of men, gainsay it? That people must be taught the principles of religion, and matters of greatest necessity to salvation, is past doubt—that they must be taught them in the most edifying and advantageous way—that personal conference, examination, and instruction have many excellent advantages, is beyond dispute—that personal instruction is recommended to us by Scripture, and the practice of the servants of Christ, and approved by the godly of all ages, is, so far as I can find, without contradiction—it is past doubt that we should perform this great duty to all the people, or as many as we can; for our love and care of their souls must extend to all. If there be a thousand or five hundred ignorant people in your

published, it requires none now. I have therefore left out these two names in the title-page, as being no longer necessary.

parish, it is a poor discharge of your duty occasionally to speak to some few of them, and let the rest alone in their ignorance, if you are able to afford them help. It is certain that so great a work as this is should take up a considerable part of our time—and it is as certain that all duties should be done in order, as far as may be, and therefore should have their appointed times; and, if we are agreed to practise according to these acknowledged truths, we need not differ upon any doubtful circumstances.

I do now, in the behalf of Christ, for the sake of his church, and immortal souls, beseech all the faithful ministers of Christ to fall immediately and effectually upon this work. Combine for a unanimous performance of it, that it may more easily procure the submission of your people. I am far from presuming to prescribe rules for you, or desiring you to tread in our steps, in any circumstances where a difference is tolerable, or to use the same catechism or exhortation that we do; only fall presently and closely to the work. If there should be any who dare withdraw from so great a duty, because they would not seem to be our followers, whereas they would have approved it if it had risen from themselves, I advise such, as they love their everlasting peace, to flee to Christ for a cure of such cankered minds: and let them know that this duty hath its rise neither from them nor us, but from the Lord; and is generally approved by his church: and for my part, let them tread me in the dirt, and let me be as vile in their eyes as they please, so they will but hearken to God and reason, and fall upon the work, that our hopes of the salvation of men, and a true reformation of the church, may be revived. I must confess I find, by some experience, that this is the work that must reform indeed; that must expel our common prevailing ignorance; that must bow the stubborn hearts of men; that must answer their vain objections, and remove their prejudice; that must reconcile their hearts to faithful ministers, and promote the success of our public preaching; and must

make true godliness a more common thing, through the grace of God, than it now is. I find that we never took the most effectual method to demolish the kingdom of darkness till now. I wonder at myself how I was kept from so clear and excellent a duty so long. I doubt not but the case of others is like mine. I was long convinced of it, but my apprehensions of the difficulties were too great, and my apprehensions of the duty too small; so that I was hindered long from the performance. I thought that the people would scorn it; and none but a few, that had least need, submit to it. The thing seemed strange; and I stayed till the people were better prepared; and I thought my strength would never go through with it, having such great burdens on me before: and thus I was long detained, which I beseech the Lord of mercy to forgive. Whereas, upon trial, I find the difficulties almost nothing to what I imagined; and I find the benefits and comforts of the work to be such that I profess I would not wish that I had forborne it for all the riches in the world. We spend Monday and Tuesday, from morning to almost night, in the work, (besides a chapelry catechised by another assistant,) taking about fifteen or sixteen families in a week, that we may go through the parish, which hath above eight hundred families, in a year: and I cannot say yet that one family have refused to come to me; and but few have excused themselves, and shifted it off: and I find more outward signs of success with most that come than of all my public preaching to them. If you ask me what course I take for order and expedition, I answer, at the delivery of the catechisms, I take a catalogue of all the persons of understanding in the parish; and the clerk goes a week before to every family, to tell them when to come, and at what hour; one family at eight o'clock, the next at nine, and the next at ten, &c.: and I am forced, by the number, to deal with a whole family at once; but do not usually admit any of another family to be present.

Brethren, do I now invite you to this work without God, without the consent of all antiquity, without the consent of the reformed divines, or without the conviction of your own consciences? See what our late assembly say in the Directory for the visitation of the sick:—"It is the duty of the minister not only to teach the people committed to his charge, in public; but *privately* and *particularly* to admonish, exhort, reprove, and comfort them, upon all seasonable occasions, so far as his time, strength, and personal safety will permit. He is to admonish them in time of health, to prepare for death; and for that purpose they are often to confer with their minister about the state of their souls," &c. Read this over again, and consider it. Hearken to God, if you would have peace with God: hearken to conscience, if you would have peace of conscience. I am resolved to deal plainly with you, though I displease you. It is an unlikely thing, that there should be a heart that is sincerely devoted to God in the breast of that man who, after advertisements and exhortations, will not resolve on so clear and great a duty as this is. As it is with our people in hearing the word, so it is with us in teaching. An upright heart is an effectual persuader of them to attend on God in the use of his ordinances; and an upright heart will as effectually persuade a minister to his duty.

You have put your hand to the plough of God; you are doubly sanctified or devoted to him, as Christians, and as pastors: and dare you after this draw back and refuse his work? You see the work of reformation at a stand, and you are engaged by many obligations to promote it; and dare you now neglect those means by which it must be done? Will you show your faces in a Christian congregation, as ministers of the gospel, and there pray for a reformation, for the conversion and salvation of your hearers, and the prosperity of the church; and, when you have done, refuse to use the means by which it must be accomplished? I know carnal wit will never want words

to gainsay that truth and duty which it abhors: it is easier to cavil against duty than perform it. But stay the end, when you shall pass your final judgment.

And let me speak one word to you that are my dear fellow-labourers in this county, who have engaged to be faithful in this work. It is your honour to lead in sacred resolutions and agreements; but if any of you should be unfaithful in the performance, it will be your double dishonour. Review your subscribed agreement, and see that you perform it with diligence and constancy. You have begun a happy work; such as will do more for the welfare of the church than many that the world doth make a greater stir about. God forbid that now any imprudence or negligence of ours should frustrate all. For the generality of you, I do not much fear it, having had so much experience of your fidelity in the other parts of your office. I earnestly beseech you all, in the name of God, and for the sake of your people's souls, that you will not be half-hearted in this work; but do it vigorously, and with all your might, and make it your great and serious business. Much judgment is required for the managing of it. Study therefore beforehand how to do it, as you study your sermons: for I perceive that all the life of the work, under God, doth lie in the prudent effectual management of searching men's hearts, and setting home the saving truths. The ablest minister is weak enough for this, and few of inferior parts will be found competent: for I fear nothing more than that many ministers who preach well, will be found unfit for this work; especially in dealing with old, ignorant, and dead-hearted sinners. Seeing then that the work is cast upon us, and we must do it, or else it must be undone, let us be up and doing with all our might, and the Lord will be with us.

I beseech you, brethren, let all this, and the many motives that I have given you, stir you up to the utmost diligence herein. When you are speaking to your people, do it with the greatest prudence and seriousness; and be as earnest with them as for life or

death: and follow it as close as you do your public exhortations in the pulpit. I profess again, it is to me the most comfortable work (except public preaching) that ever I have set my hand to: and I doubt not but you will find it so, if you faithfully perform it.

My *second* request to the reverend ministers in these nations is, That they would, without any more delay, unanimously set themselves to the practice of those parts of Christian discipline which are unquestionably necessary, and a part of their work. It is lamentable that good men who enjoy such liberty should settle themselves so long in the constant neglect of so great a duty. The common cry is, "Our people are not ready for it; they will not bear it." But is not the meaning, that *you will not bear* the trouble which it will occasion? If indeed you proclaim our churches incapable of the order and government of Christ, you give up the cause to those that withdraw from them, and encourage men to look out for better societies, where that discipline may be had. I only beseech you who desire to give a comfortable account to the chief Shepherd, and not be found unfaithful in the house of God, that you do not wilfully or negligently delay it, as if it were a needless thing; nor shrink from duty because of the trouble which attends it: for the most costly duties are usually the most comfortable; and be assured that Christ will bear the cost. I could here produce a heap of testimonies, of fathers and reformed divines, who inculcate this duty with great importunity. I shall only now give the words of two of the most godly, laborious, judicious divines, that the church of Christ had since the days of the apostles.

"But (saith Calvin) since some have a hatred and aversion to discipline, from the very name of the thing, let such consider, that if no society, nay, even a small family, can be preserved in a proper condition without discipline, it is much more necessary in the church, which ought to be kept in the most orderly state. For, as the wholesome doctrine of Christ is the life

of the church, so discipline in it is the sinews, by which all the members of the body adhere together, each in its proper place. Therefore, whoever wishes to take away discipline, or would hinder its restoration, (whether this arise from their ignorance or their endeavours,) they certainly are promoting the utter destruction of the church. For, what will be the consequence if every person may act as he please? But this would be the case, unless to the preaching of doctrine were added likewise private admonition, correction, and such like helps to support doctrine, and not suffer it to be useless. Therefore discipline is as a curb to restrain and subdue those who violently oppose the doctrine of Christ, or as a stimulus to stir up such as may be tardy. It is likewise used sometimes as a fatherly rod, by which more atrocious offenders may be chastised in the meek and gentle spirit of Christ. When, therefore, we perceive a dreadful desolation coming upon the church, and begun already, inasmuch as there is no care, nor mode of keeping the people within bounds; the very necessity of the case calls for a remedy. Now this is the only remedy which Christ himself prescribed, and which hath been always used among religious people.

"The very foundation of discipline is this; that private admonitions take place; that is, if any one doth not perform his duty willingly, or behaves with insolence, or doth not live orderly, or commits any thing which deserves reproof; that he suffer himself to be admonished; and that every one should admonish his brother when the case requires it. But especially the pastors and elders should be exceedingly vigilant; whose business it is not only to preach to the people, but to admonish and exhort from house to house; because they would be of little use by merely a general way of preaching: as Paul informs us, when he relates that he taught *publicly and from house to house;* and asserts that he was *pure from*

the blood of all, because he *had not ceased to warn every one night and day with tears.*"*

He also adds, in sec. 4, respecting the necessity of it: "They who are confident that churches can stand long without this band of discipline, are mistaken in their opinion; unless, forsooth, we can safely do without that which our Lord foresaw would be necessary for us."

And in sec. 5: "And here the same rule is to be observed in the Lord's supper, lest it should be profaned by giving it promiscuously. For it is most certain, that if he to whom the distributing of it is committed shall knowingly and willingly admit an unworthy person, whom he ought justly to repel, he is then guilty of sacrilege, as if he should expose the Lord's body to dogs."†

"Discipline (saith Zanchius) is an act by which a church forms its faithful members, and retains them when formed, not only publicly but privately, both in the true worship of God, and in good morals; and that both by doctrine, and correction, and ecclesiastical punishments and censures, and also by excommunication, if need be. A church hath power, if public instruction be not sufficient in the public place of worship, to enter the houses of the faithful, and there teach them privately, and train them up in the true doctrine and religion of Christ. And the faithful ought to suffer their pastor to enter their houses, and train them up privately. Of this we have an example in Acts xx. 20, 31. The rest of the apostles did the same. The church hath likewise power to use private admonition, correction, and reproof."‡

With respect to the sacrament, he saith, "Some object, and say, 'We will remain in the church, and hear the word, &c.: but how can we have communion with you in the Lord's supper, when many are admitted who are unclean, drunken, covetous?' &c.

* See Calvin Inst. l. 4, cap. 12, sec. 1, 2.
† See Calvin Inst. l. 4, cap. 12, sec. 5.
‡ Zanch. de Eccl. v. 3, pp. 123, 124.

To this we answer, with respect to these sinners they may be considered in two ways: those who were formerly drunken, &c., but afterwards repented; and those who still follow drunkenness and other vices, and come as such without repentance or faith. The former, we say, according to the word of God, ought not to be excluded from the Lord's table; since they are endued with true repentance and faith: the latter, we say plainly, ought not to be admitted. But that they are admitted, this may often happen two ways; either through the ignorance of the ministers, who did not know them to be such as they are; (and, indeed, we cannot commend this ignorance, because the ministers ought to know what sort of persons they are to whom they administer the Lord's supper; and if they be ignorant, they are reprehensible for a supine and reprovable negligence;) or, when it is known to all what sort of persons they are, they do not strive to repel them, through fear, or some other respect to man. This we condemn in the minister, as the fault of timidity; for a minister of Christ ought to be most sincere and valiant. But here we are not to consider merely what one or two improper ministers may do; but what is the institution of the church, and what the common custom in all churches. In all our churches, indeed, before the sacrament is administered, all such persons are excluded. And truly it is a great scandal, that both swine and dogs should have a place among the children of God; but much more so if the most holy symbols of the Lord's supper should be prostituted to such. Therefore the churches of Christ ought not to carry such wicked persons in their bosom; nor admit the worthy and unworthy promiscuously to the Lord's supper."*

Again, with respect to discipline, he saith, "Let princes and magistrates then, who are unwilling that this discipline should be restored to the church, consider what they do. This was instituted by Christ,

* Zanch. de Eccl. v. 3, p. 79.

that it might be preserved as a peculiar treasure in the church ; therefore let them who would banish it, know that they wish to banish Christ likewise. This is a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ; therefore let them who are unwilling to have it restored, know that they are unwilling the gospel of Christ should be restored, as it ought to be. How then can we boast that the gospel is restored in our churches, if we be unwilling that this, which is not the least part of the gospel, should be restored? By this vice is corrected, and virtue promoted: therefore, how shall they who are unwilling that discipline should be restored, dare to say that they hate vice, and love virtue; that they love to promote piety, and hate impiety? By this the church is preserved and governed, and the members of each particular church are united each in its proper place: therefore how can they who wish to have this divine sway, say that they wish the church of Christ to be well governed; since it cannot be well governed without this? If no family, no town, no city, no republic, no kingdom; nay, not even a little grammar school, can be governed without discipline—how can the church be governed without it?

"But some will say, 'We are afraid of sedition and tumult.' We answer, Therefore neither should the gospel be preached. What! Do not our princes and magistrates perceive how much evil may arise in the church, both within and abroad, by the neglect or contempt of this discipline? Abroad, there is nothing which so much keeps back papists and others, or at least prevents them from embracing the gospel, as the neglect of discipline in our churches. Within, there is nothing which so much nourishes vice, heresy, &c. Do not princes perceive that their own churches are full of heretical and ungodly men? To these churches flow all sorts of fanatics and ungodly persons, as to an asylum. Why so? Because there is no discipline there.

"Therefore, let princes, and all those who are unwilling that ecclesiastical discipline should be restored

in the churches, and are opposed to it, and proscribe it, know that they are opposed to Christ. They who hinder ministers to exercise it, hinder Christ and God to exercise their prerogative. For what do ministers, when they excommunicate? They pronounce the sentence of God. For Christ saith, 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth,' &c. What is it then which they do, who hinder the church to pronounce the sentence of God? They sin against Christ, and are guilty of injuring the divine Majesty. If any one should hinder a judge to pronounce the sentence of the emperor, would he not be guilty of injuring the majesty of the emperor? Therefore let them take heed what they are doing. Hitherto Christ has ruled his church by this discipline; and even princes, nay, some ministers likewise, are unwilling it should be so governed. Let them look to it! I pronounce, I proclaim, I declare, that those persons commit sin, who do not restore it, when they might and ought to restore it!"*

I hope both magistrates and ministers, that are guilty, will give me leave to say the like with Zanchy, if not to call them traitors against the majesty of God, that hinder discipline, and adversaries to Christ; yet at least to pronounce, proclaim, protest, that they sin against God, who set it not up when they may and ought. But what if the magistrate will not help us? Nay, what if he were against it? So he was for about three hundred years, when discipline was exercised in the primitive church.

To this Zanchy adds, "O ye ministers of the church, ye ought to exercise this discipline, as far as it refers to the agreement and peace of the church! For God hath given you this power, and no one can take it away; nor should ye be content in teaching what is to be done, and what is to be avoided; and take no care, but suffer every one to live as he please; but you must insist upon discipline."†

* Zanch. de Eccl., v. 3, pp. 134, 135. † Ibid.

Read the rest of the solid advice which Calvin and Zanchy, in the fore-cited places, give both to ministers and people, where discipline is wanting.

My *third* and last request is, that all the faithful ministers of Christ would, without any farther delay, unite and associate for the fartherance of each other in the work of the Lord, and the maintaining of unity and concord in his church; and that, for these ends, they would not neglect their brotherly meetings, nor spend them unprofitably, but improve them to their edification, and the effectual carrying on of the work. Read that excellent letter of *Edmund Grindal*, archbishop of Canterbury, to *Queen Elizabeth*, for ministerial meetings and exercises. [Such bishops would have prevented our contentions and wars.] You may see it in Fuller's New History of the Church of England. Let none draw back who agree in the essentials of faith and godliness.

Brethren, I crave your pardon for the imperfections of this address; and, earnestly longing for the success of your labours, I shall daily beg of God, that he may excite you to those duties which I have here requested you to perform, and preserve and prosper you therein, against all the serpentine subtlety and rage that is engaged to oppose and hinder you.

Your unworthy fellow-servant,

RICHARD BAXTER.

April 15, 1656.

TO THE PEOPLE.

THE reason why I have called this volume *the first part* of the book, is, because I intend, if God enable me, and give me time, a *second part*, containing the duty of the people to their pastors; and therein to show, (1.) The right and necessity of a ministry. (2.) The way to know which is the true church and ministry, how we justify our own calling to this office, and how false prophets and teachers must be discerned. (3.) How far the people must assist the pastors in the work of the gospel, and the pastors employ them for that end. And (4.) How far the people must submit to their pastors, and what other duty they must perform in that relation. But because my time and strength are so uncertain, that I know not whether I may live to publish my yet imperfect preparations on this subject, I dare not let this first part come into your hands without a word of caution and advice, lest you should misunderstand or misapply it.*

1. Entertain no unworthy thoughts of your pastors; because we here confess our own sins, and aggravate them, in order to our humiliation and reformation. You know it is men, and not angels, whom God hath appointed to the work of the ministry, and to be overseers of his church.

2. Brethren, let me deal freely with you. The ungrateful contempt of a faithful ministry is the shame of the faces of thousands in this land; and, if true repentance prevent it not, they shall better know in hell whether such ministers were their friends or foes, and what they would have done for them if their counsel had been heard. When the messengers of God were mocked, his words despised, and his prophets abused, the wrath of the Lord arose on the Israelites themselves, and there was no remedy.

* I do not find that ever the author published the above.

(2 Chron. xxxvi, 16.) Shall ministers study, preach, and pray for you, and after all be despised? When they have the God of heaven and their own consciences to witness that they desire not yours, but you; are willing to spend and be spent for you; that all the wealth in the world is nothing to them in comparison of your salvation, and that all their labours and sufferings are for your sake; if yet they be requited with your contempt and unteachableness, see who will be the losers in the end. When God himself shall justify them with *Well done, good and faithful servant*, let those who reproached, despised, and condemned them, defend their faces from shame, and their consciences from the accusations of their horrid ingratitude, if they can! Read the Scripture, and see whether they who obeyed God's messengers, or they who despised and disobeyed them, fared best. And if any tell you that we are not the ministers of Christ, leave them not till they also tell you which is his true church and ministry, and where they are; and, by the time they have answered you, you will know more of their mind.

3. See that you obey your faithful teachers, and improve their help for your salvation while you have it. Take heed that you refuse not to learn when they would teach you. Especially see that you refuse not to submit to them in the duty of private instruction mentioned in this treatise. Go to them when they desire you, and be thankful for their help; yea, and at other times, when you need their advice, go to them of your own accord and ask it. Their business is to guide you in the way of life. If you seek not their direction, you either despise salvation itself, or you are so proud as to think yourselves sufficient to be your own directors. Shall God in mercy send you leaders to teach you and conduct you in the way to glory; and will you send them back, or refuse their assistance, and say, "We have no need of their instruction?" Is it for their own gain that they trouble you, or is it for your everlasting gain? Remem-

ber what Christ said to his messengers, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me." If your obstinate refusal of the instruction of your ministers should put them to bear witness against you in judgment, and say, "Lord, I would have taught these ignorant sinners, and admonished these worldly impenitent men, but they would not so much as come to me, nor speak with me;" look you to it, and answer it if you can: for my part, I would not then be in your situation for all the world. But I shall say no more to you on this point, only desire you to read and consider the exhortation published in our agreement itself, which speaks to you more fully. If you read this book, remember that the duty which you find to belong to the ministers shows also what belongs to yourselves. For it cannot be our duty to teach, catechise, advise, &c., if it be not yours to hear, and learn, and seek advice.

"There will (saith Dr. Hammond) be little matter of doubt or controversy, but that private, frequent, spiritual conference, between fellow Christians, and especially (in important and difficult matters) between the presbyter and those of his charge, even in the time of health, particularly that part of it which is spent in the discussion of every man's special sin, and infirmities, and inclinations, and may prove very useful and advantageous, in order to spiritual directions, reproof, and comfort, to the making the man of God perfect: and, to tell the truth, if the pride and self-conceit of one, the wretchlessness of another, the bashfulness of a third, the nauseating and instant satiety of any good in a fourth, the follies of men and the artifices of Satan had not put this practice quite out of fashion among us, there is no doubt but more good might be done by ministers this way, than is now done by any other means; yea, than by public preaching itself, (which hath now the fate to be cried up, and almost wholly depended on, which yet need not be neglected the more when this is used,) it being the most likely way, as Quintilian saith, (com-

paring the public and private teaching of youth,) to fill narrow bottles, (and such are the most of us,) by taking them separately and pouring water into each, than by setting them all together and throwing never so much water upon them."*

"The ignorant soul (saith Gurnal) feels no such smart. If the minister stay till he sends for him to instruct him, he may sooner hear the bell proclaim his death, than see a messenger from him. You must seek them out, and not expect that they will come to you. These are a sort of people that are more afraid of their remedy than their disease, and study more how to hide their ignorance than how to have it cured; which should make us pity them the more, because they pity themselves so little. I confess it is no small unhappiness to some of us, who have to do with a multitude, that we have neither time nor strength to make our addresses to every particular person in our congregations, and attend on them as their needs require; and yet we cannot well satisfy our consciences otherwise. But let us look to it, that though we cannot do to the height of what we would, we be not found wanting in what we can. Let not the difficulty of our province make us like some, who, when they see they have got more work upon their hands than they can well despatch, grow sick of it and sit down, out of a lazy despondence, and do nothing. O, if our hearts were once filled with zeal for God and compassion to the souls of our people, we should up and be doing, though we could lay but one brick a day, and God would be with us. It may be you find a people rude and sottishly ignorant, like stones in a quarry; and trees unfelled shall not bring the work to such perfection in your days as you desire; yet, as David did for Solomon, you may, by your pains in teaching and instructing them, prepare materials for another, who shall rear the temple."†

April 16, 1656. RICHARD BAXTER.

* Power of the Keys, cap. 4, sec. 104, p. 113.
† The Christian in complete Armour, p. 235.

THE

REFORMED PASTOR.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."—Acts xx, 28.

CHAPTER I.

A brief explication of the text—The doctrine and method—The terms opened—Wherein we must take heed to ourselves—Reasons why we must take heed to ourselves.

Reverend and dearly beloved Brethren,—Though some think that Paul's exhortation to these elders proves him their ruler, we who this day speak to you from the Lord, hope that we may freely do the like, without any jealousy of such a conclusion. Though we teach our people as officers set over them in the Lord, yet we may teach one another as brethren in office as well as in faith. If the people of our charge must teach, admonish, and exhort each other daily, (Col. iii, 16; Heb. iii, 13,) no doubt teachers may do it to one another without any supereminence of power or degree. We have the same sins to mortify and destroy, and the same graces to be quickened and strengthened as our people have: we have greater works to do than they, greater difficulties to overcome, and no less necessity is laid upon us; and therefore we have need to be warned and awakened, if not instructed, as well as they; so that I confess I think such meetings should be more frequent, if we had nothing else to do together but this. And that we should deal as plainly and closely with one another as the most serious among us do with our flocks, lest if they only have the sharp admonitions and reproofs,

they only should be sound and lively in the faith. That this was Paul's judgment, there need no other proof than this rousing and heart-melting exhortation to the Ephesian elders—a short sermon, but not soon learned.

Our time will not allow me to touch any part of it but my text, which contains a twofold duty, and a fourfold motive to enforce it.

The first duty is to *take heed to themselves;* the second, *to take heed to all the flock;* and the work for the flock, which is to be done with the greatest care, is *to feed them, or act the part of good shepherds towards them.*

The motives are these:—Their engagement and relation; they are the overseers of the flock—the efficient cause, even the authority and excellence of Him who called them to it; the Holy Ghost—the dignity of the object; the church of God, the most excellent and honourable society of the world—the tender regard that Christ hath to this church, and the price it cost him; he purchased it with his own blood.

The terms used in the text do not require much explication. Προσεχειν is, in general, to apply the mind to any thing with strict and close attention. Here it signifies diligently to watch over ourselves, over our own conduct and behaviour, our heart and our life; all our tempers, words, and actions. Ποιμνιον (*a little flock*) does not here signify the whole church of Christ; but that particular church of which those elders had the charge. Επισκοπους, (*bishops* or *overseers,*) persons appointed by Christ to teach and guide those churches, or that particular church, in the way of salvation. The same persons who before are called elders of the church of Ephesus, are here called bishops. Εθετο, (*hath made, placed, ordained,* or *constituted,*) and imports the qualification and appointment of those elders or bishops, by the Holy Ghost, to their particular charge. Ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, *to feed the church of God.* Ποιμαίνειν is by some ren-

dered barely to *feed*, as here, and by others to *rule:* but it ought not to be confined to either; for it comprehends both, or the whole of the pastoral work. In a word, it is to do the work of a pastor to all the flock, or church of God, over which he is appointed. Ην περιεποιήσατο which he (God) hath *acquired* or *purchased*, in a peculiar way and manner, viz., Διὰ του ιδίου αἵματος, *with his own blood.* Jesus Christ is he who purchased the church with his own blood, and is here expressly called God. He indeed is *God over* ALL, *blessed for ever more.*

The doctrine contained in the text is, that *the pastors, or overseers of the churches of Christ, must take great heed both to themselves and to all their flocks, in every part of their pastoral work.* In handling which, I shall (1.) briefly show you what is meant by pastors and churches. (2.) What it is to take heed to ourselves, and wherein it must be done. (3.) Give some reasons for that part of the work. (4.) What it is to take heed of all the flock in our pastoral work, and how it must be done. (5.) I shall make some application of the whole.

I. By a *pastor* or *bishop* here, is meant an officer appointed by Christ for the ordinary teaching and guiding a particular church and all its members, in order that they may be saved, and walk so as to please God. The office itself he has appointed in his holy word, and he calls men to it. (1.) By endowing them with suitable gifts. (2.) By his providential dispensations. (3.) By the work and inspiration of his Spirit in their hearts. (4.) By the ordination or appointment of his present officers, and the approbation of the church.

Teaching and guidance comprehend the main parts of the work to which they are appointed. A particular church is the object of their work, by which they are distinguished from apostolical itinerant ministers. By the flock and church is meant that particular society of Christians, of which these bishops or elders have the charge, associated for personal communion

in God's public worship, and other mutual assistance in the way of salvation.

II. Let us next consider *what it is to take heed to ourselves, and wherein it must be done.* Here, for the sake of brevity, I shall adjoin the application to the explication. Take, therefore, I beseech you all, this explication, as so much advice and exhortation to the duty: and let your hearts, as well as your understandings, attend to it.

1. Take heed to yourselves, lest you be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and strangers to the effectual working of that gospel which you preach; and lest, while you proclaim the necessity of a Saviour to the world, your own hearts neglect him, and you miss of an interest in him and his saving benefits. Take heed to yourselves lest you perish while you call upon others to take heed of perishing; and, lest you famish yourselves while you prepare them food. Though there be a promise of shining as the stars to those who turn many to righteousness, it is on the supposition that they are first turned to it themselves: their own sincerity in the faith is the condition of their glory, simply considered, though their great ministerial labours may be a condition of the promise of their greater glory. Many men have warned others not to go to that place of torment, who yet have hasted thither themselves. Many a preacher is now in hell who had a hundred times called upon his hearers to use the utmost care and diligence to escape it. Is it reasonable to imagine that God will save men for offering salvation to others, while they refuse it themselves; or for telling others those truths which they themselves neglect or abuse? Believe it, brethren, God never saved any man for being a preacher, nor because he was an able preacher; but because he was justified and sanctified, and, consequently, faithful in his Master's work. Take heed therefore to yourselves first, that you *be* that which you persuade your hearers to be, and *believe* that which you persuade them daily to believe; and have

heartily entertained that Christ and Spirit which you offer unto others. He who bid you love your neighbours as yourselves, implied that you should love yourselves, and not hate and destroy yourselves and them.

2. Take heed to yourselves, lest you live in those actual sins which you preach against in others, and lest you be guilty of that which you daily condemn. Will you make it your work to magnify God, and, when you have done, dishonour him as much as others? Will you proclaim Christ's governing power, and yet contemn it, and rebel yourselves? Will you preach his laws, and wilfully break them? If sin be evil, why do you live in it? If it be not, why do you dissuade men from it? If it be dangerous, how dare you venture on it? If it be not, why do you tell men so? If God's threatenings be true, why do you not fear them? If they be false, why do you trouble men needlessly, and put them into such frights without a cause? Do you know the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death; and yet will you do them? (Rom. i, 32.) Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, or be drunk, or covetous, art thou such thyself? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? (Rom. ii, 21, 22, 23.) What, shall the same tongue speak evil that speaketh against evil? Shall it censure, and slander, and secretly backbite; and yet cry down these in others? Take heed to yourselves, lest you cry down sin, and not overcome it; lest, while you seek to bring it down in others, you bow to it, and become its slaves yourselves. For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. (2 Pet. ii, 19.) To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness. (Rom. vi, 16.) It is easier to chide at sin than to overcome it.

3. Take heed to yourselves, that you be not unfit

for the great employment you have undertaken. He must not be himself a babe in knowledge who will teach men all those mysterious things that must be known in order to salvation. O what qualifications are necessary for that man who has such a charge upon him as we have! How many difficulties in divinity to be opened; yea, concerning the fundamentals that must be known! How many obscure passages of Scripture to be expounded! How many duties to be done, wherein we and others may miscarry, if in the matter, end, manner, and circumstances, they be not well informed! How many sins to be avoided, which, without understanding and foresight, cannot be done! What a number of subtle temptations must we open to our people, that they may escape them! How many weighty, and yet intricate cases of conscience have we almost daily to resolve! Can so much work, and such work as this, be done by raw, unexperienced men? O what strong holds have we to batter! What subtle, diligent, and obstinate resistance must we expect from every heart we deal with! Prejudice has blocked up our way: we can scarcely procure a patient hearing. They think ill of what we say while we are speaking it. We cannot make a breach in their groundless hopes and carnal peace, but they have twenty shifts and seeming reasons to make it up again; and twenty enemies, who appear to be friends, are ready to help them. We do not dispute with them upon equal terms, but have children to reason with who cannot understand us; distracted men (in spirituals) who will bawl us down with raging nonsense. We have wilful, unreasonable people to deal with; who, when they are silenced, are never the more convinced; and, when they can give you no reason, they will give you their resolution. We dispute the case against men's will and sensual passions as much as against their understanding, and these have neither reason nor ears: their best arguments are, "I will not believe you, nor all the preachers in the world, in such things. I will not change my mind or

life; I will not leave my sins; I will never be so precise, whatever be the consequence." We have not only one, but multitudes of raging passions, and contradicting enemies, to dispute with at once, whenever we go about the conversion of a sinner; as if a man were to dispute in a fair or tumult, or in the midst of a crowd of violent scolds: what equal dealing, and what success could be expected there? Yet such is our work, and a work that *must* be done.

O, dear brethren, what men should we be in skill, resolution, and unwearied diligence, who have all this to do? Did Paul cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things!" and shall we be proud, careless, or lazy, as if *we* were sufficient? As Peter says to every Christian, in consideration of our great approaching change, "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" so may I say to every minister, seeing all these things lie upon our hands, What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy endeavours and resolutions for our work! This is not a burden for the shoulders of a child. What skill doth every part of our work require, and of how much moment is every part! To preach a sermon, I think, is not the hardest part; and yet what skill is necessary to make plain the truth, to convince the hearers, to let in irresistible light to their consciences, to keep it there, and drive all home; to screw the truth into their minds, and work Christ into their affections; to meet every objection, and clearly to resolve it; to drive sinners to a stand, and make them see that there is no hope of their escaping destruction except they be converted; and to do all this, both for language and manner, as becomes our work, and yet suited to the capacities of our hearers; this, and much more that should be done in every sermon, surely requires to be done with a great deal of holy skill. The great God, whose message we deliver, should be honoured by our delivery of it. It is lamentable that, in delivering a message from the God of heaven, of everlasting consequence to the souls of men, we should behave so

weakly, so imprudently, or with so much coldness and indifference, as to cause the whole to miscarry in our hands; and God be dishonoured, his work disgraced; and sinners rather hardened than converted; and all this through our weakness or neglect! How often have carnal hearers gone jeering home at the palpable and dishonourable failings of the preacher! How many sleep under us, because our hearts and tongues are sleepy; and we bring not with us so much skill and zeal as to awake them!

Moreover, what skill is necessary to defend the truth against gainsayers, and to deal with disputing cavillers! And, if yet we fail through weakness, how will they insult and triumph; and who knows how many weak ones may be perverted by their success? What skill is necessary to deal in private with poor ignorant souls for their conversion!

O, brethren, do you not shrink and tremble under the sense of all this work! Will a common measure of holy skill and ability, of prudence and other qualifications, serve for such a task as this? I know necessity may cause the church to tolerate the weak; but wo to us if we tolerate and indulge our own weakness. Do not reason and conscience tell you that, if you dare venture on so high a work as this, you should spare no pains to be fitted for the performance of it. It is not now and then an idle snatch or taste of studies that will serve to make a sound divine. I know that laziness has taught us to make light of all our studies, and that the Spirit only must wholly qualify us for the work; as if God commanded the use of means, and yet would warrant the neglect of them. As if it were his way to cause us to thrive in a course of idleness, and to bring us to knowledge by dreams when we are asleep, or to take us up into heaven and show us his counsels while we think of no such matter, but are rooting in the earth. O that men should dare so sinfully by their laziness to quench the Spirit, and at the same time pretend the Spirit for their doing of it! God has required of us that we be not slothful

in business, but fervent in spirit serving the Lord. Such we must provoke our hearers to be, and such we must be ourselves. O, brethren, therefore lose no time; study and pray, confer and practise; for, by these four ways your abilities must be increased. Take heed to yourselves lest you be weak through your own negligence, and lest you mar the work of God by your own weakness. "As the man is, so is his strength," Judg. viii, 21.

4. Take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine, and you lay such stumbling-blocks before the blind as may be the occasion of their ruin; lest you unsay that with your lives which you say with your tongues, and be the greatest hinderers of the success of your own labours. It greatly hinders our work when other men are all the week long contradicting to the people in private what we have been speaking to them from the word of God in public; but it will much more hinder if we ourselves contradict it, if our actions give our tongue the lie, if we build up an hour or two with our mouths, and all the week after pull down with our hands! This is the way to make men think that the word of God is but an idle tale, and to make preaching seem no better than prating. He who means as he speaks will surely do as he speaks. One proud lordly word, one needless contention, one covetous action, may cut the throat of many a sermon, and blast the fruit of all that you have been doing. Tell me, brethren, in the fear of God, do you regard the success of your labours, or do you not? Do you long to see it upon the souls of your hearers? If you do not, what do you preach for, what do you study for, what do you call yourselves the ministers of Christ for? But if you do, then surely you cannot find in your heart to mar your work for a thing of naught. What, do you regard the success of your labours, and yet will not part with a little to the poor; put up with an injury, stoop to the meanest, nor forbear your passionate or lordly carriage; no, not for the winning of souls, and attaining the end of all

your labours! You much regard their success, indeed, to sell it at so cheap a rate.

It is a palpable error in those ministers who make such a difference between their preaching and their living; they study hard to preach exactly, and study little or none at all to live exactly. All the week long is little enough to study how to speak two hours; and yet one hour seems too much to study how to live all the week. They are loath to misplace a word in their sermons, or to be guilty of any remarkable mistake or blunder; (and I blame them not, for the matter is holy and weighty;) but they make nothing of misplacing affections, words, and actions in the course of their lives. O how curiously have I heard some men preach, and how carelessly have I seen them live! They have been so accurate as to the wording part of their preparations, seldom preaching seemed a virtue to them, that their language might be the more polished; and all the rhetorical jingling writers they could meet with were pressed to serve them for the adorning of their style. They were likewise so nice in hearing others, that no man pleased them who spoke as he thought; and yet, when it came to matter of practice, and they were once out of church, how incurious were the men, and how little did they regard what they said or did, provided it were not so palpably gross as to dishonour them! They who preached precisely would not live precisely. What difference between their pulpit speeches and their familiar discourse! They who cannot bear vulgar solecisms and paralogisms in a sermon, can easily tolerate them in their conversation.

Certainly, brethren, we have very great cause to take heed what we do as well as what we say. If we will indeed be the servants of Christ, we must not be tongue-servants only; but be doers of his work, that we may be blessed in our deed. As our people must be doers of the word, and not hearers only; so we must be doers, and not preachers only, lest we be deceivers of ourselves. A practical doctrine must be practically preached. We must study as hard how

to live well as how to preach well. We must think, and think again, how to order our lives so as may most tend to men's salvation, as well as compose our sermons. When you are studying what to say to them, I know these are your thoughts, (or else they are worthless, and not to the purpose,) "How shall I get within them? what shall I say that is likely most effectually to convince and convert them, and tend to their salvation?" And should you not as diligently think, "How shall I live, and what shall I say and do, and how shall I dispose of all that I have as may most tend to the saving of men's souls?"

Brethren, if saving souls be your end, you will certainly intend it as well out of the pulpit as in it! If it be your end, you will live for it, and contribute all your endeavours to attain it; and if you do so, you will as well ask concerning the money in your purse, as the words of your mouth, "Which way should I lay it out for the greatest good, especially to men's souls?" O that it were your daily study how to use your substance, your friends, and all you have, for God, as well as your tongues! Then we should see that fruit of your labours which otherwise is never likely to be seen. If you intend the end of the ministry in the pulpit only, then it seems you take yourselves for ministers no longer than you are there; and if so, I think you are unworthy to be esteemed such at all.

III. Having showed you how it is that we must take heed to ourselves, and what is comprised in this command, I am next to give you the *reasons* for it, which I entreat you to take as so many motives to awaken you to your duty, and apply them as we go.

1. You have a heaven to win or lose yourselves, and souls that must be happy or miserable for ever; and therefore it concerns you to begin at home, and to take heed to yourselves as well as to others. Preaching well may succeed to the salvation of others, without the holiness of your own hearts or lives: it is possible, at least, though not usual; but it is impossible it should serve to save yourselves. Many

shall say at that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? who shall be answered with, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity. O, sirs, how many men have preached Christ, and perished for want of a saving interest in him! How many that are now in hell, have told their people of the torments of hell and warned them to avoid it! How many have preached of the wrath of God against sinners, that are now feeling it! O what more melancholy case can there be than for a man that made it his trade and calling to proclaim salvation, and to help others to attain it, yet after all to be himself lost for ever! Alas, for us, that we should have so many books in our libraries that tell us the way to heaven; that we should spend so many years in reading those books, and studying the doctrine of eternal life; and, after all this, to miss it! That we should study and preach so many sermons upon salvation, and yet fall short of it; so many sermons on damnation, and yet fall into it! And all because we preached so many sermons concerning Christ, while we neglected him; on the Spirit, while we resisted him; on faith, while we did not heartily believe; on repentance and conversion, while we continued in sin; and on a heavenly life, while we remained carnal and earthly! If we be divines only in tongue and title, and have not the divine image upon our souls, nor give up ourselves to the divine honour and will, no wonder if we be separated from the divine presence, and denied the fruition of God for ever! Believe it, sirs, God is no respecter of persons: he saveth men not for their coats or callings—a holy calling will not save an unholy man. If you stand at the door of the kingdom of grace, to light others in, and will not go in yourselves, you shall knock in vain at the gates of glory, who would not enter at the door of grace. You shall then find that your lamps should have had the oil of grace, as well as of ministerial gifts; of holiness, as well as of doctrine; in order to your having part in the glory which you preached. Need I tell you that

preachers of the gospel must be judged by the gospel, and stand at the same bar, and be sentenced on the same terms, and dealt with as severely as other men? Take heed therefore to yourselves, for your own sakes; seeing you have souls to save or lose as well as others, and must be saved in the same way, and on the same terms.

2. Take heed to yourselves, for you have a depraved nature, and sinful inclinations, as well as others. If innocent Adam had need to take heed, and lost himself and us for want of it, how much more need have we? Sin may dwell in us, when we have preached never so much against it: one degree of it prepareth the heart to another, and one sin inclineth the mind to more. If one thief be in the house he will let in the rest, because they have the same disposition and design. A spark is the beginning of a flame; and a small disease may bring a greater. A man that knows himself to be purblind should take heed to his feet. Alas, even in our hearts, as well as in our hearers, there is an averseness to God, a strangeness to him, unreasonable, and almost unruly passions. In us there may be the remnants of pride, unbelief, self-seeking, hypocrisy, and the most hateful and deadly sins. And doth it not then concern us to take heed? Is so much of the fire of hell unextinguished that at first was kindled in us? Are there so many traitors in our hearts, and is it not time for us to take heed? You will scarcely let your little children go themselves while they are weak, without calling on them to take heed of falling. And how weak, alas, are those of us that seem strongest! How apt to stumble at a very straw. How small a matter will cast us down, by enticing us to folly, kindling our passions and inordinate desires, perverting our judgment, abating our resolutions, cooling our zeal, or interrupting our diligence! Ministers are not only sons of Adam, but sinners against the grace of Christ, as well as others; and so have increased their radical sin. Those treacherous hearts will one time or other deceive you,

if you do not take heed. Those sins that seem now to lie dead, will revive; your pride, worldliness, and many other noisome vices will spring up, that you thought had been weeded out by the roots. It is most necessary, therefore, that men of such infirmities should take heed to themselves, and be exceedingly careful of their own souls.

3. And the rather also, take heed to yourselves, because so great a work as ours puts men on greater exercise and trial of their graces, seeing they are exposed to greater temptations than most other men. Weaker gifts and graces may carry a man out in a more private and even course of life, who is not called to such great trials. Smaller strength may serve for lighter work. But, if you will venture on the great work of the ministry; if you will lead on the troops of Christ against the face of Satan and his followers; if you will engage yourselves against principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places; if you undertake to rescue captivated sinners, and to fetch men out of the devil's paws; do not think that a heedless, careless minister, is fit for so great a work as this. You must expect to come off with greater shame, and deeper wounds of conscience, than if you had lived a common life, if you attempt to go through such things as these with a careless soul. We have seen many men who lived as private Christians, in good reputation for parts and piety; but when they took upon them either military employment or magistracy, where the work was above their parts, and they were exposed to temptations above their strength, they proved a disgrace to the office they sustained. And we have also known some private Christians of note, who, having thought too highly of their parts, and thrust themselves into the ministerial office, that proved empty men, and burdens to the church. They might have done God more service in the station of the higher rank of private men, than they do among the lowest in the ministry. If you will venture into

the midst of the enemies, and bear the burden and heat of the day, take heed to yourselves.

4. Take heed to yourselves, because the tempter will make his first and sharpest attack on you. He bears those the greatest malice, who are engaged to do him the greatest mischief. As he hates Christ more than any of us, because he is the General of the field, and the Captain of our salvation, and doth more than all the world besides against the kingdom of darkness, so he hates the leaders under him more than the common soldiers, for the same reason. He knows what devastation he is likely to make among the rest, if the leaders fall before their eyes. He hath long practised fighting, neither against great nor small, comparatively, but these; and of smiting the shepherds, that he might scatter the flock: and so great hath been his success, that he will follow it as far as he is able. Take heed therefore, brethren, for the enemy hath a special eye upon you. You are sure to have his most subtle insinuations, incessant solicitations, and violent assaults. Take heed to yourselves, lest he overwit you. The devil is a greater scholar than you are, and a more nimble disputant: he can transform himself into an angel of light to deceive. He will get within you, and trip up your heels before you are aware: he will cheat you of your faith or innocence, before you are aware: nay, he will make you believe it is multiplied or increased when it is lost. You shall see neither hook nor line, much less the subtle angler himself, while he is offering you his bait: and his bait shall be so fitted to your temper and disposition, that he will be sure to find advantages within you, and make your own principles and inclinations betray you; and whenever he prevails against you, he will make you the instruments of your own ruin. O what a conquest he has got, when he makes a minister lazy and unfaithful, or draws him into some scandalous sin! He then glories against the church, and says, "These are your holy preachers: you see what their preciseness is come to!" Nay, he glories against Je-

sus Christ himself, and says, "These are thy champions! I can make thy chief servants forsake and abuse thee: I can make the stewards of thy house unfaithful." If he did so insult against God upon a false surmise, and tell him he could make Job curse him to his face, what will he not do if he should prevail against us? And at last he will insult and triumph over you for betraying your great trust, disgracing your holy profession, and doing such essential service to your greatest enemy. O do not thus gratify Satan! Do not make him so much sport. Suffer him not to use you as the Philistines did Samson; first to deprive you of your strength, then put out your eyes, and finally make you the subjects of his triumph and derision.

5. Take heed to yourselves also, because there are many eyes upon you, and therefore many who watch your conduct. If you miscarry, the world will ring with it. The eclipses of the sun by day are seldom without witnesses. As you have engaged to be the light of the world and the church, you must expect that men's eyes will be upon you. Although other men may sin without observation, you cannot: and you should thankfully consider what a great mercy it is that you have so many eyes to watch over you, and so many ready to tell you of your faults, and thereby have greater helps than others, at least for restraining you from sin; though some may do it maliciously, yet you have the advantage of it. God forbid that we should do evil in public, and sin wilfully while the world is gazing on us! "He that is drunk, is drunk in the night; and he that sleepeth, doth sleep in the night," 1 Thess. v, 7. What fornicator so impudent as to sin in the open streets? Consider that you are always in the open light; even the light of your own doctrine will disclose your evil deeds. While you are as lights set upon a hill, do not expect to lie hid. Take heed therefore to yourselves, and do your work as those who remember that the world is looking on them, and that with the quick-sighted eye

of malice; ready to make the worst of all, to find the smallest fault where it is, to aggravate it where they find it, and to divulge and make it as far as possible answer their designs; yea, to make faults where they cannot find them. How cautiously should we walk before so many evil-minded observers! "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

6. Take heed to yourselves, because your sins are more heinous than the sins of other men. It is noted among King Alphonsus's sayings, that a great man cannot commit a small sin. We may with more propriety say, that a teacher of others cannot commit a small sin; or at least, that the sin is great, as committed by him, which in another is comparatively small. (1.) You are more likely than others to sin against knowledge, because you have more than they; at least you sin against more light and means of knowledge. What! do you not know that covetousness and pride are sins? Do you not know the dreadful consequence of being unfaithful to your trust, and by negligence or self-seeking to betray immortal souls? You know your Master's will; and if you do it not, you shall be beaten with many stripes. If you sin, it is because you will sin. (2.) Your sins have more hypocrisy in them than those of other men. O what a heinous thing it is in us to study to say all we can against sin, and make it as odious to our people as possible, and when we have done so to live in it, and secretly cherish that which we openly defamed! What vile hypocrisy it is to make it our daily work to cry sin down, and yet hug it in our bosom; to declaim against it in public, and in private to make it our companion; to bind heavy burdens on others, and not to touch them ourselves with a finger! What will you say to this in judgment? Do you think as ill of sin as you speak, or do you not? If you do not, why do you dissemble? If you do, why do you commit it? O bear not that badge of the miserable Pharisees, "They say, but do not." Many a minister of the

gospel will be confounded at last by this heavy charge of hypocrisy. (3.) Your sin has more perfidiousness in it than that of other men. You are more publicly and solemnly engaged against it. Besides all your common engagements as Christians, you have many more as ministers. How often have you proclaimed the evil and danger of sin, and called sinners from it! How often have you declared the terrors of the Lord! All these implied that you saw the evil of it, and had renounced it yourselves. Every sermon you preached against it, every private exhortation, and every confession of it in the congregation, laid an engagement upon you to forsake it. Every child that you have baptized, and entered into the covenant with Christ; and every administration of the Lord's supper, wherein you called men to renew their covenant, implied that you had renounced the flesh and the world, and given yourselves to Christ. How often and how openly have you borne witness to the odiousness and damnable nature of sin! And yet will you entertain it against all these professions and testimonies of your own? O what treachery it is to make such a stir in the pulpit against sin, and after all to entertain it in the heart, and give it the room there that is due to God, and even prefer it before the glory of the saints!

Many more aggravations of your sins might be mentioned, but want of time obliges us to leave them to your own consideration.

7. Take heed to yourselves, because the honour of your Lord and Master, and of his truth and his ways, lies more on you than on other men. As you may do him more service, so also more disservice than others. The nearer men stand to God, the more is he dishonoured by their miscarriages, and the more are they imputed by foolish men to God himself. The heavy judgment recorded in 1 Sam. ii, 29, was threatened and executed on Eli and on his house, because they "kicked at his sacrifice and offering." "For therefore was the sin of the young men great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the

Lord," v, 17. It was that great aggravation, of "causing the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme," which provoked God to deal so severely with David, (2 Sam. xii, 11–14.) If you be indeed Christians, the glory of God is dearer to you than life itself. Take heed therefore what you do against it, as you would take heed what you do against your own lives. Would it not wound you to the heart to hear the name and truth of God reproached on your account? To see men point to you and say, "There goes a covetous minister, a secret tippler, a scandalous man; these are they that preach up strictness, while they themselves live as loose as others; they condemn us by their sermons, and condemn themselves by their lives and conversation; for, notwithstanding all their talk, they are as bad as we." O, brethren, could your hearts endure to hear men cast the dung of your iniquities in the face of the holy God, in the face of the gospel, and of all who desire to fear the Lord? Would it not break your hearts to think that all the godly Christians around you should suffer reproach through your misdoings? If one of you who is a leader of the flock, should be ensnared in a scandalous crime, there is scarcely a man or woman, who is diligently seeking salvation, within the hearing of it, but, besides their grief for your sin, are sure to have it cast in their teeth by the ungodly, however they may detest and lament it. The ungodly husband will tell his wife, the ungodly parents their children, and neighbours and fellow-servants one another, saying, "These are your godly preachers: you may see what comes of all your stir! Are you any better than others? Nay, you are all alike." Such words as these must all the godly in the country perhaps hear through your misconduct. "It must needs be that offences come, but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh," Matt. xviii, 7.

O take heed, brethren, in the name of God, of every word that you speak, and every step you tread; for you bear the ark of the Lord; you are intrusted

with his honour: and dare you cast it in the dirt? If you "that know his will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and being confident that you yourselves are guides of the blind, and lights to them that are in darkness, instructers of the foolish, teachers of babes;" if you, I say, live contrary to your doctrine, and "by breaking the law dishonour God, the name of God will be blasphemed among the ignorant and ungodly through you," Rom. ii, 19–24. And you are not unacquainted with that standing decree of Heaven, "Them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii, 30. Never did any man dishonour God but it proved the greatest dishonour to himself.

8. Take heed to yourselves: for the souls of your hearers, and the success of all your labours depend upon it. God generally fits men for his work before he employs them in accomplishing it; and exercises them in those works for which they are prepared. If the work of the Lord be not deep and genuine in your own hearts, how can you expect that he should bless your labours for the effecting it in others? He may do it if he please, but you have much cause to doubt whether he will. I shall here give you some *reasons* to satisfy you, that he who would be instrumental in saving others must take heed to himself, and that God doth seldom prosper the labours of unconverted men. (1.) Can it be expected that God should bless that man's labours (I mean comparatively) who worketh not for God, but for himself? Now this is the case with every unconverted man. None but the upright make God their chief end, and do all heartily for his honour. Others make the ministry but a trade to live by: they choose it rather than another calling, because their parents intended them for it; because it is a pleasant thing to know, and is a life wherein they have greater opportunities of furnishing their intellects with all kinds of science; because it is not so laborious to those who wish to favour

the flesh; because it is accompanied with reverence and respect from men; because they think it a fine thing to be leaders and teachers, and to have others depend on them, and receive the law at their mouth; and because it affords them a competent maintenance. For such ends as these are they ministers, and for these do they preach; and can it be expected that God should bless the labours of such men? It is not for him they preach, but themselves, and their own reputation or gain; not him, but themselves, that they seek and serve, and therefore no wonder if he leave them to themselves for their success. (2.) Can you suppose that he is likely to be as successful as others, who is not hearty and faithful in his work, does not really believe what he says, and is not truly serious even when he seems to be most diligent? Can you suppose that an unholy man can be hearty and serious in the ministerial work? It cannot be. A kind of seriousness indeed he may have; but the seriousness and fidelity of a real believer, whose ultimate end is the glory of God and man's salvation, this he has not. O, sirs, all your preaching and persuading of others, will be but dreaming and trifling hypocrisy, till the work be thoroughly wrought in your own hearts! How can you set yourselves day and night to a work which your carnal hearts are averse from? How can you call, with serious fervour, upon poor sinners to repent and come to God, who have never repented nor come to him yourselves? How can you heartily follow sinners with importunate solicitations to flee from sin, and to engage in a holy life, who have never yourselves felt the evil of sin, nor the worth of holiness? I tell you, these things are never properly known, till they are felt; nor properly felt till they are possessed: he who feels them not himself, is not so likely to speak feelingly of them to others, nor help others to the possession of them. How can you follow sinners with compassion in your hearts, and tears in your eyes, and beseech them in the name of the Lord to stop their course, and return and live, who never had so much

compassion on your own souls, as to do this for yourselves? What, can you love other men better than yourselves; and have pity on them while you have none upon yourselves? Sirs, do you think they will be hearty and diligent to save men from hell, who are not heartily persuaded that there is a hell; or to bring men to heaven, who do not really believe that there is such a place? He who hath not such a belief of the word of God and the life to come, as takes off his own heart from the vanities of this world, and causes him diligently to seek his own salvation, cannot be expected to be faithful in seeking the salvation of other men. Surely he who dare damn himself, dare let others alone in the way to damnation; and he who will sell his Master with Judas, for silver, will not stick to make merchandise of the flock. I confess that man shall never have my consent to be intrusted with the care of others, and to oversee them in order to their salvation, who does not take heed to himself. (3.) Do you think it is likely that he will fight against Satan with all his might, who is his servant; or, will he do any great harm to the kingdom of the devil, who is himself a subject of that kingdom; or, will he be true to Christ who is in covenant with his enemy? And this is the case with every unconverted man, of what cloth soever his coat is made. They are the servants of Satan, and the subjects of his kingdom, and he worketh and ruleth in their hearts. What prince chooses the friends and voluntary servants of his enemy to lead his armies in war against him? It is this that makes so many preachers of the gospel enemies to the work of the gospel which they preach. O how many such traitors have been in the church of Christ in all ages, who have done more against him under his colours, than they could have done in the open field! They have spoken well of Christ, Scripture, and godliness in general; and yet slyly done what they could to bring it into disgrace, and make men believe that those who set themselves to seek God with all their hearts, were but a company of hypocrites, or self-

conceited fanatics. It cannot be expected that a slave of Satan should be any other than an enemy to the cross of Christ. What though they live civilly, preach plausibly, and have the outside of an easy and cheap religion; they may be as fast in the devil's snare by worldly-mindedness, pride, a secret dislike of strict godliness, or by a heart that is not rooted in the faith, and unreservedly devoted to God in Christ, as any others are by drunkenness, uncleanness, and such egregious sins. I know that a wicked man may be more desirous of the reformation of others than himself; and may therefore, with some earnestness, dissuade them from sin; because he can preach against sin at a far easier rate than forsake it. (4.) Consider, that the success of your labours depends on the grace and blessing of the Lord; and where has he promised his assistance and blessing to ungodly men? If he see it good to communicate to his church a blessing even by such, yet he does not promise THEM a blessing. To his faithful servants he has promised, that he will be with them, that he will put his Spirit upon them, and his word into their mouths, and that Satan shall fall before them as lightning from heaven. But where is there any such promise to the ungodly? Nay, do they not rather, by their abuse of his goodness, provoke him to forsake them, and blast their endeavours, at least as to themselves? For I do not deny but that God may, and sometimes does, do good to his church, even by unconverted and wicked ministers; but not so usually, nor eminently, as by his faithful servants.

CHAPTER II.

What it is to take heed to all the flock. It is implied that every flock have their own pastor or pastors; that regularly the flock be no larger than the pastors can oversee and take heed to them all—Of the end of this oversight—Of the subject of this work—Of the objects of it. The unconverted; the converted; the young and weak; those under particular trials; those declining in religion; those exercised with great temptations; the disconsolate; the strong—Of the work itself. Public preaching; sacraments; public prayer, praise, and benediction—Oversight of the members distinctly. Knowing them; instructing the ignorant; advising them who seek advice; looking to particular families; resisting seduction; encouraging the obedient; visiting the sick; comforting the distressed; privately admonishing offenders; public discipline by admonition, exhortation to open repentance, and praying for the offender; assisting the penitent; confirming, absolving, &c.; rejecting the obstinately impenitent; receiving the penitent into communion—The manner and necessity of these acts.

HAVING showed you what it is to take heed to ourselves, and why it must be done; I am next to show you *what it is to take heed to all the flock, wherein it consists, and how it must be exercised.* It was necessary first to consider *what we must be, and what we must do for our own souls,* before we speak of what we must do for others. "Lest one, whilst healing the wounds of others, should catch the infection himself through a negligence of his own safety; or, whilst helping his neighbours, should forget himself, or should fall whilst raising others up." Yea, lest all his labours come to naught, because his heart and life are naught that perform them. "For there are some who examine spiritual precepts with diligent care; but those things which they clearly comprehend they trample upon by their manner of life. They teach hastily what they have learned by study without labour, and oppose by their morals what they preach in words. Hence it is that when the shepherd walks upon the brink of a precipice, the flock follow him there too." When we have led them to the living waters, if we muddy it by our filthy lives, we may lose our labour, and yet they be never the better. "To disturb the water with the feet, is to corrupt by a bad

life the knowledge of divine things which was acquired by study."

Before we speak of the work itself, we must begin with what is implied and presupposed.

1. It is here implied, that *every flock should have their own pastor* (*one or more*) *and every pastor his own flock.* As every troop or company in a regiment must have their own captain and other officers, and every soldier know his own commander and colours; so it is the will of God that every church have their own pastors, and that all Christ's disciples know their own teachers that are over them in the Lord. The universal church of Christ consists of particular churches, guided by their own overseers; and every Christian must be a member of one of these churches. "They ordained them elders in every church," Tit. i, 5. Though a minister be an officer in the universal church, yet he is in a special manner the overseer of that particular church which is committed to his charge.* From this relation of pastor and flock, arise all the duties which we mutually owe to each other. As we must be true to our trust, so must our people be faithful to us, and obey the just directions that we give them from the word of God.

2. When we are commanded *to take heed to all the flock*, it is plainly implied, that *flocks must be no greater, regularly and ordinarily, than we are capable of overseeing or taking heed of.* That particular churches should not be greater, nor ministers fewer, than is consistent with taking heed to *all;* for God will not lay upon us impossibilities: he will not bind us to leap up to the moon, touch the stars, or number

* In the Methodist connection, all the societies in a circuit constitute the flock of each superintendent, with his fellow labourer or labourers. Over these they are appointed overseers for the time being; these are to feed and to take heed to every individual of them. To all that hear them in every place, they are faithfully to preach the word, and do all the good they can, that they may bring them to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; but those in society are their special care, and have a claim on them for every part of the ministerial work; not only public teaching, but also private and personal visiting and instruction.

the sands on the sea-shore. If it be the pastoral work to oversee and take heed to all the flock, then surely there must be such a proportion of pastors assigned to each flock, or such a number of souls in the care of each pastor, as he is able to take such heed to as is here required. It would have been well for the church had the rule here laid down by the apostle been carefully attended to; had the labourers always been able and faithful, and in proportion to the people intrusted to their care, so that they might have taken heed to all the flock.

Having told you what is here implied, I come next to the duty itself. This taking heed to all the flock is, in general, *a very great care of the whole, and every part, with great watchfulness and diligence, in the use of all those holy actions and ordinances which God requires us to use for their salvation.*

More particularly, this work may be considered, (1.) In respect to the subject matter of it. (2.) Its object. (3.) The work itself, or the actions which we must perform. (4.) The end of it.

I shall begin with the last, as being first in our intention, though last attained.

I. The ultimate end of our pastoral oversight is that which is the ultimate end of our whole life, even *pleasing and glorifying God*, with which is connected the glory of the human nature of Christ, the glorification of his church, and of ourselves in particular: and the more immediate end of our office is the sanctification and holy obedience of the people of our charge—their unity, order, beauty, strength, preservation, and increase; and the right worshipping of God, especially in the solemn assemblies. By which it is manifest, that before a man is capable of being a true pastor of a church, according to the mind of Christ, he must have such a high estimation of these things, as to make them the great and only end of his life.

1. The man, therefore, who is not himself taken up with the predominant love of God, is not himself d-

voted to him, and does not devote to him all that he has and can do—the man who is not in the habit of pleasing God, does not make him the centre of all his actions, nor live to him as his God and happiness; that is, the man who is not a sincere Christian himself, is utterly unfit to be pastor of a church: and, unless in a case of the greatest necessity, the church should not admit such, so far as they can discover them. A man who is not heartily devoted to God, and his service and honour, will never apply himself as he ought to the pastoral work; nor indeed can he, while he remains such, do any part of that work, nor speak one word in Christian sincerity: for no man can be sincere in the use of the means, who does not regard the end. A man must love God *above* all, in order to serve him *before* all.

2. No man is fit to be a minister of Christ who is not of a public spirit as to the church; does not delight in her beauty, nor long for her felicity. As the good of the commonwealth must be the end of the magistrate, so must the felicity of the church be the end of her pastors. They must rejoice in her welfare, and be willing to spend and be spent for her sake.

3. No man is fit to be pastor of a church who does not set his heart on the life to come, and regard the matters of everlasting life above all the things of this present world; and who is not sensible, in some measure, how much the inestimable riches of glory are to be preferred to the trifles of time: for he will never set his heart on the work of men's salvation, who does not himself heartily believe and value that salvation.

4. He who does not delight in holiness, hate iniquity, love the unity and purity of the church, abhor discord and divisions, and take pleasure in the communion of saints, and the public worship of God with his people, is not fit to be pastor of a church: for none of these can have the true views and motives of a pastor, and therefore cannot do the work. The relation that subsists between the end and the means,

and how necessary the knowledge of the one is to a right use of the other, is well known.

II. The subject matter of the ministerial work is, in general, *spiritual things;* matters relative to our pleasing God, and the salvation of our people. It is not about temporal and transitory things. Our business is not to dispose of commonwealths, nor to touch men's purses or persons by our penalties: but it consists only in these two things:—(1.) In revealing to men that happiness, or chief good, which must be their ultimate end. (2.) In acquainting them with the right means for the attainment of that end, helping them to use them, and deterring them from the contrary.

1. It is the first and great work of the ministers of Christ to acquaint men with that God who made them, and is their happiness; to open to them the treasures of his goodness, and tell them of the glory that is in his presence, which all his chosen people shall enjoy; that thus, by showing men the certainty and the excellence of the promised felicity, and the perfect blessedness of the life to come, in opposition to the vanities of this present life, we may turn the stream of their thoughts and affections, bring them to a due contempt of this world, and excite them to seek durable treasure. And this is the work that we should lie at with them night and day. Could we once get them right in regard of the end, and their hearts set unfeignedly on God and heaven, the chief part of the work were done; for all the rest would undoubtedly follow. Here we must diligently show them the vanity of their sensual felicity, and convince them of the baseness of those pleasures which they prefer to the delights of God.

2. Having set before them the right end, our next work is to acquaint them with the means of attaining it. Here the evil of all sin must be made manifest; the danger that it has brought us into, and the hurt it has already done us, must be clearly set before them. Then we have to unfold to them the great mystery of

redemption; the person, natures, incarnation, perfection, life, miracles, sufferings, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, glorification, dominion, and intercession of the blessed Son of God; as also the tenor of his promises, the conditions imposed on us, the duties which he has commanded us, and the everlasting torments which he has threatened to the finally impenitent neglecters of his grace. O what a treasury of his blessings and graces, and the privileges of his saints, have we to exhibit! What a blessed life of holiness and communion with God have we to recommend to the sons of men! And at the same time how many temptations, difficulties, and dangers, to disclose and assist them against! How many precious spiritual duties have we to set them upon, excite them to, and direct them in! How many objections of flesh and blood, and cavils of vain men, have we to refute! How much of their own corruptions and sinful inclinations to discover and root out! We have to disclose the depths of God's bottomless love and mercy, the depth of the mysteries of his designs, and works of creation, redemption, providence, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification; the depth of Satan's temptations, and the depth of their own hearts. In a word, we must teach them as much as we can of the whole *word* and *works* of God. O what two volumes are these for a minister to preach upon! How great, how excellent, how wonderful, how mysterious! All Christians are disciples or scholars of Christ, the church is his school; we are his ushers; the Bible is his grammar: this it is that we must be daily teaching them. The papists teach them without a book. Lest they should learn heresies from the word of truth, and falsehood from the truth of God, they must learn only the books or words of their priests. But our business is to teach them line upon line, and precept upon precept, that we may help them to understand this book of God. So much for the subject matter of our work.

III. The object of our pastoral care is *all the flock;*

that is, the church, and every member thereof. We shall consider—(1.) The whole body or society. (2.) The parts or individual members.

1. Our first care must be about the whole: and therefore the first duties to be done are public duties, which are done to the whole. As our people are bound to prefer public duties before private, so are we much more: but this is so commonly confessed, that I shall say no more of it.

2. That which is less understood and considered is, that *all* the flock, even *each individual member* of our charge, must be taken heed to, and watched over by us in our ministry. To this end it is presupposed necessary that (unless where absolute necessity forbids it, through the scarcity of pastors and greatness of the flock) we should *know* every person that belongs to our charge; for how can we take heed to them if we do not know them? Or how can we take that heed which belongs to the special charge that we have undertaken, if we know not who are of our charge, and who not? How can we tell whom to exclude till we know who are included? Or how can we refute the accusations of the offended, who tell us of the ungodly and corrupt members of our churches, when we know not who are members, and who are not? Doubtless the bounds of our parishes will not tell us; neither will bare hearing us discover them, as long as those are used to hear who are members of other churches, or of none at all. Nor yet is participation of the Lord's supper a sure mark, while strangers may be admitted, and many members accidentally kept back. Though much probability may be gathered from these circumstances, yet a more full knowledge of our charge is necessary where it can be had.

All the flock, being thus known, must afterwards be *taken heed to.* One should suppose that all reasonable men would be satisfied of this, and that it would need no farther proof. Does not a careful shepherd look after every individual sheep; a good schoolmaster look to every scholar, both with regard to instruc-

tion and correction; a good physician to every patient; and good commanders to every soldier? Why then should not the teachers, the pastors, the physicians, the guides of the churches of Christ, take heed to every individual member of their charge? Christ himself, the great and good Shepherd, and Master of the church, who has the whole to look after, does nevertheless take care of every individual. In Luke xv, he tells us that he is the Shepherd who "leaveth the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, to seek after *one* that was lost;" or as the "woman who lighteth a candle, and sweepeth the house, and searcheth diligently to find the *one* groat that was lost; and, having found it, doth rejoice and call her friends and neighbours to rejoice." And he also assures us that "even in heaven there is joy over *one* sinner that repenteth." The prophets were often sent to single men. Ezekiel was made a watchman over individuals, and commanded to say to the wicked, "Thou shalt surely die." Ezek. iii, 18, 19. Paul taught them "publicly and from house to house," which was meant of his teaching particular families; for even the public teaching was then in houses: and *publicly*, and *from house to house*, signify not the same thing. The same apostle "warned every man, and taught every man in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," Col. i, 18. Christ expounded his public parables to the twelve apart. Every man must "seek the law at the mouth of the priest," Mal. ii, 7. We must give an account of our watching for the souls of all that are bound to obey us, Heb. xiii, 7. Many more passages in Scripture assure us that it is our duty to take heed to every individual person in our flock: and many passages in the ancient councils plainly tell us that it was the practice of those times, till churches began to be crowded, and became so large that they could not be guided as churches should be. But I will pass over all these, and mention only one passage in Ignatius to Polycarp: "Let assemblies be often gathered: seek after (or inquire of)

all by name; despise not the men and maid servants." You see it was then considered a duty to look after every member of the flock by name, though it were the meanest servant man or maid. The reasons for this I shall pass over now, because they will fall in when we come to the duty of catechising and personal instruction.

We are next to consider our work *in reference to the several qualities of the object.* And because we shall here speak of the *acts* with the *object*, there will need the less afterwards to be said of them.

1. The first part of our ministerial work lies in bringing unsound professors of the faith to sincerity, that they who before were Christians in name only, may be such indeed. Though it does not belong to us, as their pastors, to convert professed infidels to the faith, because they cannot be members of the church while they are such, yet it belongs to us, as their pastors, to convert these seeming Christians to sincerity, because they may be visible members of our churches. And though we be not absolutely certain that this or that man in particular is unsound, and unsanctified, yet, as long as we are certain that many such are in the church, and have too great reason to believe that it is so with several individuals whom we can name, we have therefore ground enough to deal with them for their conversion. And if we be certain by their notorious impiety that they are no Christians, and so to be ejected from the communion of such; yea, if they be professed infidels, yet we may deal with them for their conversion, though not as their pastors, yet as ministers of the gospel. So that for these reasons we may conclude, that the work of conversion is the great thing that we must first aim at, and labour with all our might to effect.

Alas, the misery of the unconverted is so great that it calls aloud for our compassion! They are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, and have yet no part nor fellowship in the pardon of their sins, or the hopes of glory. We have therefore a work of the

greatest necessity to do for them, even "to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ," Acts xxvi, 18, to soften and open their hearts to the entertainment of "the truth, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of it, that they may escape out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will," 2 Tim. ii, 25. He who sees one man sick of a mortal disease, and another only pained with the toothache, will be moved more to compassionate the former than the latter, and will surely make more haste to help him, though he were a stranger, and the other a son. It is so distressing to see men in a state of damnation, wherein if they should die they are eternally lost, that methinks we should not be able to let them alone either in public or private, whatever other work we have to do. I confess I am forced frequently to neglect that which would tend to the increase of knowledge in the godly, and may be called strong meat, because of the lamentable necessity of the unconverted. Who is able to talk of controversies or nice unnecessary points; yea, or of truths of a lower degree of necessity, how excellent soever, while he sees a company of ignorant, carnal, miserable sinners before his face, who must be changed or damned? Methinks I hear them crying out for help, and the most speedy help! Their misery speaks the louder, because they have not hearts to seek for help themselves. Many a time have I known that I had some hearers of nicer fancies, who looked for rarities, and were addicted to despise the minister if he told them not something more than ordinary; and yet I could not find in my heart to turn from the observation of the necessities of the impenitent, for the humouring of these; nor to leave speaking to the apparently miserable for their salvation, to speak to such novelists; no, nor even said so much as otherwise I should have done to the weak for their confirmation

and increase in grace. Methinks, as Paul's spirit was stirred within him when he saw the Athenians so addicted to idolatry, so it should cast us into one of his paroxysms to see so many men in such manifest danger of being everlastingly undone; and if by faith we did indeed look upon them as within a step of hell, it would more effectually untie our tongues than Crœsus's danger did the tongue of his son. He that will let a sinner go to hell for want of speaking to him, sets less by souls than the Redeemer of souls did, and less by his neighbour than rational charity will allow him to do by his greatest enemy. O, therefore, brethren, whomsoever you neglect, neglect not the most miserable! Whomsoever you pass over, forget not poor souls who are under the condemnation and curse of the law, and may look every hour for the infernal execution, if a speedy change do not prevent it. O, call after the impenitent, and ply this great work of converting souls, whatever else you leave undone!

2. The next part of the ministerial work is the building up of those who are already truly converted; and according to the various states of such, the work is various. In general, as they are either young and weak, or such as are in danger of growing worse, or already declining; so our work is all reducible to these particulars; *confirmation*, *progress*, *preservation*, and *restoration*.

(1.) Many of our flock are young and weak: though of long standing, yet of small proficiency and strength; and indeed it is the most common condition of the godly. Most of them stick in weak and low degrees of grace; and it is no easy matter to get them higher. To bring them to higher and stricter opinions is very easy; that is, to bring them from the truth into error, on the right hand as well as on the left: but to increase their knowledge and gifts is not easy; and to increase their graces is the hardest of all. It is very troublesome and dangerous to be weak: it exposes us to many snares, abates consolation and delight in God, prevents our enjoying the sweetness of his ways,

makes us go to work often with much backwardness, and come off with little peace or profit. It causes us to be less serviceable to God and man, to bring less honour to our Master and profession, and do less good to all about us. We find little benefit by the means we use; we too easily play with the serpent's baits, and are insnared by his wiles. A seducer will easily shake us; and evil may be made to appear to us as good, truth as falsehood, sin as duty; and so, on the contrary, we are less able to resist and stand an encounter; we sooner fall; we rise with greater difficulty; and are more apt to prove a reproach to our profession. We know less of ourselves, and are more liable to mistake our own state, not observing corruptions when they rise and gain advantage. In a word, we live to less profit both to ourselves and others, and are also unwilling and unready to die.

Seeing, then, the case of weakness and inability in religion is comparatively so deplorable, how diligent should we be to cherish and increase the grace of such! The strength of Christians is the honour of the church. When men are inflamed with the love of God, live by a lively working faith, set light by the profits and honours of the world, love one another with a pure heart fervently, can bear and heartily forgive a wrong, and suffer joyfully for the cause of Christ; when they study to do good, and walk inoffensively in the world, as ready to be servants of all for their good, becoming all things to all men in order to win them, and yet abstaining from the appearances of evil, and seasoning all their actions with a sweet mixture of prudence, humility, zeal, and heavenly spirituality; O what an honour are such to their profession! What ornaments to the church; and how eminently serviceable to God and man! Men would sooner believe that the gospel is indeed a word of truth and power, if they could see more such effects of it as these upon the hearts and lives of men. The world is better able to read the nature of religion in men's lives, than in the Bible. They who obey not the word

may be won by the conversation of such. It is therefore a necessary part of our work, to labour more for the perfecting of the saints, that they may be strong in the Lord, and fitted for their Master's use.

(2.) Another sort of converts who need our special help are those that labour under some particular distemper, which keeps under their graces, and makes them temptations and troubles to others, and a burden to themselves. Alas, too many such there are! Some are particularly addicted to pride, some to worldly-mindedness, some to this or that sensual desire, and many to frowardness and disturbing passions. It is our duty to do what we can for the assistance of all these; partly by dissuasions and clear discoveries of the odiousness of the sin, and partly by suitable directions concerning the remedy, to help them to the conquest of their corruptions. We are leaders of Christ's army against the powers of darkness, and must resist all the works of darkness wherever we find them, though it be in the children of light. We must be no more tender of the sins of the godly than the ungodly, nor any more befriend or favour them. By how much more we love the persons above others, by so much the more must we express it in the opposition of their sins. And yet even here we must expect to meet with some who are very tender and difficult to deal with, especially when iniquity has got head, and made a party, and many have fallen in love with it: they will be as pettish and impatient of reproof as some who are worse, and will even interest piety itself in their faults, and say that a minister who preaches against them preaches against the godly—a most heinous crime this, to make God and godliness accessory to their sins! But the ministers of Christ must do their duty, notwithstanding their peevishness; and must not so far hate their brother as to forbear the plain rebuking of him, and suffer sin to lie upon his soul. Though it must be done with *much* prudence, yet done it *must* be.

(3.) Another sort to whom we must attend, are

declining Christians, who either have fallen into some scandalous sin, or else abated their zeal and diligence, and show us that they have lost their former love. As the case of backsliders is very distressing, so our diligence must be great for their recovery. It is distressing to them to lose so much of their life, peace, power, and usefulness, and to become so serviceable to Satan and his cause. It is distressing to us to see that all our labour is come to this, and that when we had taken so much pains with men, and had such hopes of them, all should be so far frustrated. And it is most distressing of all, to think that God should be dishonoured by those whom he has so loved, and done so much for; that the enemy should get such advantage over them, that Christ should be so wounded in the house of his friends, the name of God evil spoken of among the wicked, and all who fear him reproached for their sakes! Besides, partial backsliding has a natural tendency to total apostacy, and will effect it, if special grace prevent it not. The more distressing the case of such is, the more lies upon us, and so much the more must we bestir ourselves for their effectual recovery. To "restore those who are overtaken with a fault, in the spirit of meekness," Gal. vi, 1, 2, and yet to see that the sore be thoroughly searched and healed, and the joint properly set again, whatever pain it cost; and in all this to look to the honour of the gospel, and see that they rise by such free and full confessions of true repentance, that some reparation may thereby be made to the church, and their holy profession, for the wound they had given them by their sin, requires much skill and faithfulness.

(4.) Another part of the ministerial work is to deal with those who are fallen under some great temptation. Much of our assistance is needful to our people in such a case; and therefore every minister should be a man that hath much insight into the tempter's wiles. We should know the great variety of them, and the cunning craftiness of all Satan's instruments who lie in wait to deceive, and the devices of the grand

deceiver. Some of our people lie under temptations to error and heresy, especially the young, unsettled, and most self-conceited; and those who are most conversant or familiar with seducers. Young, unsettled Christians, are commonly of their mind who have most interest in their esteem, and most opportunity of familiar talk to draw them into their way: and, as they are tinder, so deceivers want not the sparks of zeal to set them in a flame. A zeal for error, and opinions of our own, is natural, and easily kindled and kept alive: but it is far otherwise with the spiritual zeal for God. O what a deal of holy prudence and industry is necessary in a pastor, to preserve the flock from being tainted with heresies, and from falling into pernicious conceits and practices; and especially to keep them in unity and concord, and prevent the rising and increase of divisions! If there be not a remarkable conjunction of accomplishments, and a skilful improvement of parts and interests, it will hardly be done, especially in such times as ours, when the sign is in the head, and the disease is epidemical. If we do not publicly maintain the credit of our ministry, and second it by unblameable and exemplary lives, and privately meet with seducers, and shame them; if we be not able to manifest their folly, and do not closely follow our staggering people before they fall; how quickly may we give great advantage to the enemy, and let in such an inundation of sin and calamity, as will not easily be again cast out!

Others lie under a temptation to worldly-mindedness; others to gluttony and drunkenness; and others to uncleanness: some to one sin and some to another. A faithful pastor therefore should have his eye upon them all, and labour to be acquainted with their natural temperament, and also with their occasions or affairs in the world, and those with whom they live or converse, that so he may know where their temptations lie, and then speedily, prudently, and diligently help them.

(5.) Another part of our work is to comfort the

disconsolate, and to settle the peace of our people's souls, and that on sure and lasting ground. To which end the quality of the complainants, and the course of their lives must needs be known; for all people must not have the same consolations that have similar complaints. But of this I have spoken already elsewhere; and there is so much said by many, especially by Mr. Bolton, in his Instructions for right Comforting, that I shall say no more.

(6.) The rest of our ministerial work is with those who are strong; for they also have need of our assistance, partly to prevent their temptations and declinings, and preserve the grace they have; partly to help them to a farther progress and increase; and partly to direct them in the improving of their strength for the service of Christ, and the assistance of their brethren; as also to encourage them, especially the aged, the tempted, and afflicted, to hold on, and to persevere, that they may attain the crown. All these are the objects of the ministerial work, and must be taken heed to.

IV. Having done with our work in respect of its objects, I am next to speak of the *acts themselves.*

1. One part of our work, and that the most excellent, because it tends to work on many, is the public preaching of the word. A work this which requires greater skill, and especially greater life and zeal, than any of us bring to it. It is no small matter to stand up in the face of a congregation, and deliver a message of salvation or damnation, as from the living God, in the name of our Redeemer. It is no easy matter to speak so plain that the ignorant may understand us, so seriously that the deadest hearts may feel us, and so convincingly that contradicting cavillers may be silenced. I know it is a great dispute whether preaching be proper to the ministers or not. The decision seems not very difficult. Preaching to a congregation as their ordinary teacher, is proper to a minister in office; and preaching to the unbelieving world, (Jews, Mohammedans, or Pagans,) as one who has

given up himself to that work, and is separated and set apart to it, is proper to a minister in office: but preaching to a church, or to infidels, occasionally, as an act of charity, upon an extraordinary or special call, may be common to others. The governor of a church, when he cannot preach himself, may, in a case of necessity, appoint a private man, *pro tempore*, to do it, who is able, as Mr. Thorndike has shown. But no private man may obtrude without his consent, who, by office, is the guide and pastor of that church. A master of a family may preach to his own family, a schoolmaster to his scholars, and any man to those whom he is obliged to teach; so that he go not beyond his ability, and do it in a due subordination to church-teaching, and not in a way of opposition and division. A man who is not of the trade, may do some one act of a tradesman, in a corporation, for his own use, his family, or friend; but he may not separate himself to it, or set it up and make it his profession, to live by it, unless he have been apprentice, and made free. For though one man of ten thousand may do it of himself as well as he that has served an apprenticeship, yet that is not usually the case: and the standing rule must not bend to extraordinary cases, lest it undo all; for that which is extraordinary and rare in such cases, the law looks upon as a *non-ens*. But the best way to silence such teachers, is for those to whom it belongeth, to do it themselves so diligently, that the people may not have need to go a begging; and to do it so judiciously and affectingly that a plain difference may appear between them and the others, and that those men's works might be shamed by theirs: and also by adding holy lives, and unwearied diligence to high abilities, that they may keep up the reputation of their sacred office, so that neither seducers nor tempted ones may fetch matter of temptation from our blemishes or negligence.

2. Another part of our pastoral work is to administer the holy mysteries, or seals of God's covenant, baptism and the Lord's supper. This also is claimed

by private usurpers: but I will not stand to discuss their claim. A great fault it is among ourselves; some are careless in their manner of administration, others totally neglect them, and others lay such a stress on circumstances as to make them a matter of much contention, even that ordinance where union and communion is so professed.

3. Another part of our work, is to guide our people, and be as their mouth in the public prayers of the church, and the public praises of God; as also to bless them in the name of the Lord. This sacerdotal part of the work is not the least, nor to be thrust into a corner, as by too many of us it is. A great part of God's service in the church assemblies, was wont in all ages of the church, till of late, to consist in public praises and eucharistical acts in holy communion: and the Lord's day was still kept as a day of thanksgiving, in the hymns and common rejoicings of the faithful, in special commemoration of the work of redemption, and the happy condition of the gospel church. I am as sensible of the necessity of preaching as most others; but yet methinks the solemn praises of God should take up much more of the Lord's day than they do in most places: and, methinks, they who magnify gospel privileges, and a life of love and heavenly joys, should be of my mind in this; and their worship should be evangelical, as their doctrine pretends to be.

4. Another part of the ministerial work, is to have a special care and oversight of each member of the flock; the parts whereof are these:—

(1.) We must labour to be acquainted with the state of all our people as fully as we can. To know the persons and their inclinations, and conversation; to know what are the sins that they are most in danger of, and what duties they neglect for the matter or manner, and what temptations they are most liable to: for if we know not their temperament and disease, we are likely to prove but unsuccessful physicians.

(2.) We must use all the means we can to instruct the ignorant in the matters of their salvation; by plain familiar words; by giving or lending, or otherwise helping them to books that are fit for them; by persuading them to learn catechisms; and those that cannot read, to get help of their neighbours; and by prevailing with their neighbours to afford them help, who have opportunities, and are willing to attend for that purpose.

(3.) We must be ready to give advice to those who come to us with cases of conscience, especially the great case which the Jews put to Peter, and the jailer to Paul and Silas, "What must we do to be saved?" A minister is not only for public preaching, but to be a known counsellor for their souls, as the lawyer is for their estates, and the physician for their bodies; so that every man who is in doubts and straits, should bring his case to him, and desire resolution. Not that a minister should be troubled with every small matter, in which judicious neighbours can give them advice as well as he; no more than a lawyer or physician should be troubled with every trifling or familiar case, where others can tell them as much as they: but, as when their estate or life is in danger, they should go to ministers;—as Nicodemus came to Christ; and as was usual with the people to go to the priest, whose lips must preserve knowledge, and at whose mouth they must ask the law, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. And because the people are grown unacquainted with the office of the ministry, and their own necessity and duty therein, it belongs to us to acquaint them therewith, and to press them publicly to come to us for advice in cases of such great importance to their souls. We must not only be willing to put up with the trouble, but draw it upon ourselves by inviting them to come. What abundance of good might we do, could we but bring our people to this! And, doubtless, much might be done in it, if we did our duty. How few have I ever heard who heartily pressed their people to their duty in this! A

sad case, that people's souls should be so injured and hazarded by the total neglect of so great a duty, and ministers scarce ever tell them of it, or awaken them to it! Were they but duly sensible of the need and weight of this, you would have them more frequently knocking at your doors, opening their cases to you, making known their sad complaints, and begging your advice. I beseech you to stir them more up to this for the future, and perform it carefully when they seek your help. To this end, it is very necessary that we should be acquainted with practical cases, and especially with the nature of true grace, and able to assist them in trying their states, and in resolving the main question that concerns their everlasting life or death. One word of seasonable and prudent advice given by a minister to persons in necessity, has done more good than many sermons.

(4.) We must also have a special eye upon families, to see that they be well ordered, and the duties of each relation performed. The life of religion, and the welfare and glory of church and state, depend much on family government and duty. If we suffer the neglect of this, we undo all. What are we likely to do ourselves towards the reforming of a congregation, if all the work be cast on us alone, and masters of families neglect that necessary duty of their own, by which they are bound to help us? If any good be begun by the ministry in any soul in a family, a careless, prayerless, worldly family, is almost sure to stifle, or at least very much hinder it. Whereas, if you could but get the rulers of families to do their part, and take up the work where you leave it, and help forward with it, what abundance of good might be done? I beseech you therefore to do all that you can to promote this business, if you desire the true reformation and welfare of your parishes. To which end let these things be performed. [1.] Get certain information how each family is ordered, and how God is worshipped in them, that you may know how to proceed in your care over them for their farther good. [2.] Go now and then

among them when they are likely to be most at leisure, and ask the master of the family whether he pray with them, or read the Scriptures, or what he does. Labour to convince the negligent of their sin: and if you have opportunity, pray with them before you leave them, and give them an example of what you would have them do, and how; and get a promise of them, that they will be more conscientious therein for the future. [3.] If you find any unable to pray in tolerable expressions, through ignorance and want of practice, persuade them to study their own wants, and get their hearts affected with them, and to go often to those neighbours who do pray, that they may learn; and in the meantime endeavour to get them to use a form of prayer, rather than none. Only tell them that it is their sin and shame that they have lived so negligently as to be unacquainted with their own necessities, and not know how to speak to God in prayer, when every beggar can find words to ask an alms; and therefore tell them that this form is but for necessity, as a crutch to a cripple, while they cannot do so well without it: but they must not resolve to take up there, but to learn to do better as soon as they can, seeing prayer should come from the feeling of the heart, and be varied both according to our necessities and observations. Yet it is necessary for most of those who have not been brought up where prayer has been used, to begin at first with the use of a form, because otherwise they will be able to do nothing at all, and from a sense of their inability wholly neglect the duty, though they desire to perform it: for many persons can offer up some honest requests in secret who are not able before others to speak tolerable sense. And I will not be one of them who would rather the duty were wholly neglected, or profaned and made contemptible, than encourage such to use a form, either recited by memory or read. [4.] See that they have some profitable and moving book, besides the Bible, in each family: if they have not, persuade them to buy some of small price and great use; such as Whately's New Birth,

and Dod on the Commandments, or some small moving sermons. If they be not able to buy them, give them some, if you can: if you cannot, get some gentlemen or other rich persons to do it; and engage them to read them at night when they have leisure, and especially on the Lord's day. [5.] By all means endeavour to prevail with them to get all their children taught to read English. [6.] Direct them how to spend the Lord's day; how to despatch their worldly business so as to prevent encumbrances and distractions; and when they have been at the assembly, how to spend the time in their families. The life of religion lies much in this, because poor people have no other considerable portion of leisure time; and therefore, if they lose this, they lose all, and will remain ignorant and brutish. Especially persuade them to these two things: If they cannot repeat the sermon, or otherwise spend the time profitably at home, that they take their family with them, and go to some godly neighbour who spends it better, that by joining with them they may have more help: that the master of the family will every Lord's-day night cause all his family to repeat the catechism to him, and give him some account of what they have learned in public that day. [7.] If there be any in the family who are known to be unruly, give the ruler a special charge concerning such; and make them know what a sin it is to connive at and tolerate them.

Neglect not, therefore, this necessary part of your work. Get masters of families to perform their duty, and they will save you much labour with the rest, or at least greatly farther the success of your labours. If a captain can get his lieutenant, cornet, and other inferior officers, to do their duty, he may rule the soldiers with less trouble, than if all lay upon his own hand alone. You are not likely to see a general reformation, till you secure family reformation. Some little obscure religion there may be in here and there one; but while it sticks in single persons, and is not

promoted by these societies, it is not likely to prosper, nor promise much for future increase.

(5.) Another part of the work of our private oversight consists in vigilantly opposing seducers; seeking to prevent the infection of our flock, and speedily reclaiming those who begin to itch after strange teachers, and turn into crooked paths. When we hear of any who lie under the influence of their temptations, or who are already deceived by them, we must immediately, with all our skill and diligence, labour to recover them. The means I shall point out in the directions at the end.

(6.) Another part of our oversight lies in the due encouragement of those who are humble, upright, obedient Christians, profit by our teaching, and are an honour to their profession. We must, in the eyes of all the flock, put some difference between them and the rest, by our praises, special familiarity, and other testimonies of our approbation, and rejoicing over them, that we may encourage them, and excite others to imitate them. God's graces are amiable and honourable in all, even in the poorest of the flock as well as in the pastors; and the smallest degrees must be cherished and encouraged, but the highest more openly honoured and propounded to imitation. They who have slighted the most gracious, because they were of the laity, while they claimed to themselves the honour of being their clergy, though adorned with little or none of that grace which shone in them; as they thereby showed themselves to be proud and carnal, so did they take the direct way to debase themselves by self-exaltation, and to bring the office itself into contempt. For if there be no honour due to the real sanctity of a Christian, much less is there any due to the relative sanctity of a pastor.

(7.) Another part of our oversight consists in visiting the sick, and helping them to prepare either for a holy life or a happy death. Though this be the business of all our life and theirs, yet at such a season it requires extraordinary care both of them and us.

When time is almost gone, and they must be now or never reconciled to God, and possessed of his grace, O how much it concerns them to redeem those hours, and lay hold upon eternal life! And when we see that we are likely to have but a few days or hours more to speak to them, in order to their endless state, what man who is not an infidel or a block, but would be with them, and do all he can for their salvation in that short space!

Will it not awake and melt us to compassion to look upon a languishing man, and think that within a few days his soul will be in heaven or hell? Surely it will try the faith and seriousness of ministers and others to be with dying men! There they have many opportunities of discerning whether they themselves are in good earnest about the life to come. So great is the change which is made by death, that it should awaken us to the greatest sensibility to see a man near it, and should provoke us, in the deepest pangs of compassion, to do the office of inferior angels for the soul before it departs from the flesh, that it may be ready for the convoy of superior angels, to transmit it to the prepared glory when it is removed from sin and misery. When a man is almost at his journey's end, and the next step puts him into heaven or hell, it is time for us to help him, if we can, while there is hope. Could they have any hope that it would be their *ultima linea rerum*, and that they would have no more to suffer when that dismal day is past, they might have such abatements of their terror as to die like brutes. But it is so far otherwise, that death itself is the smallest matter that they need to care for.

And as their present necessity should move us to take that opportunity for their good, so should the advantage that sickness and the foresight of death afford. There are few of the stoutest hearts but will hear us on their death-bed. They will then let fall their fury, and be as tame as lambs, who were before as untractable as wasps or madmen. A man may speak to them then who could not before. I find not one in

ten of the most obstinate and scornful wretches in the parish, but, when they come to die, will humble themselves, confess their fault, seem penitent, and promise if they should recover to do so no more. If the very meditation of death be so effectual in time of health, how much more when it comes in as it were at the window, and looks men in the face! O how determinately will the worst of them seem to cast away their sins, promise reformation, and cry out against their folly, and against the vanity of this world, when they see that death is in good earnest with them, and that they must die without delay! Perhaps you will say that these forced changes are not genuine, and therefore we have no great hope of doing them any saving good. I confess it is very common to be frighted into ineffectual purposes at such a season without being converted to fixed resolutions. It should make both them and us the more diligent in the time of health.

It will also be useful to ourselves to read such lectures of our own mortality. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting; for it tends to make the heart better when we see the end of all living, and what it is that the world will do for those who sell their salvation for it. When we see that death spares none, it will excite us the better to consider the use of faith and holiness, which are to prepare us for death and heaven, that we escape hell, and be happy for ever.

Because I do not intend a directory for the whole ministerial work, I will not here tell you particularly what must be done for men in the last extremity; but only remind you of these three or four things.

(1.) Delay not till strength and understanding are gone, and the time so short that you scarce know what to do; but go to them as soon as you hear that they are sick, whether they send for you or not.

(2.) When the time is so short that there is no opportunity for attempting their conversion in that distinct way which is usual with others, nor to press

truths upon them in such order, we must therefore be sure to insist upon those truths which must do the great work; showing them the certainty and glory of the life to come, the way in which it was purchased for us, and the great sin and folly of their having neglected it in the time of health; and yet the possibility which there is of obtaining it, if they do but close with it heartily as their happiness, and with the Lord Jesus as the way thereto; abhorring themselves for their former evil, and now unfeignedly resigning themselves up to him to be justified, sanctified, ruled, and saved. Three things must be chiefly insisted on. [1.] The end; the certainty and greatness of the glory of the saints in the presence of God, that their hearts may be set upon it. [2.] The sufficiency and necessity of the redemption by Jesus Christ, and the fulness of the Spirit, which they may and *must* be made partakers of. This is the principal way to the end, and the nearer end itself. [3.] The necessity and nature of repentance, faith, and resolutions for new obedience, according as there shall be opportunity. This is the subservient way, or the means that, on our part, must be performed. [4.] Labour, upon their being convinced and brought to serious deliberation, to engage them by solemn promise to Christ, and new obedience according to their opportunity, especially if you see any likelihood of their recovery. [5.] If they do recover, be sure to put them in mind of their promises. Go to them purposely to set them home upon their heart, and reduce them to the performance: and whenever you see them remiss, go to them and remind them of what they formerly said. Because it is of such use to them who recover, and has been a means of the conversion of many a soul, it is very necessary that you go also to them whose sickness is not mortal, as well as to them who are nearer death; that so you may have some advantage to move them to repentance, and engage them to newness of life, and may afterwards have this to plead against their sins. As a bishop of Colen is said by Æneas Silvius

to have answered the Emperor Sigismund, when he asked him what was the way to be saved; that "he must be what he purposed or promised to be when he was last troubled with the stone and the gout."

8. Another part of our ministerial oversight consists in the right comforting the consciences of those who are troubled, and settling our people in a well-grounded peace. But this I have spoken of elsewhere, and others have done it more at large.

9. Another part of this oversight consists in reproving and admonishing those who live offensively or impenitently, and in receiving the information of those who have admonished them more privately in vain. Before we bring such matters to the congregation, or to a representative church, it is ordinarily most fit for the minister to try himself what he can do privately to bring the sinner to repentance, especially if it be not a public crime. A great deal of skill is here required, and difference must be made according to the various tempers of offenders; but with the most it will be necessary to begin with the greatest plainness and power, in order to shake their careless hearts, and make them see what it is to dally with sin; to let them know the evil of it, and its sad effects; its cruelty, unreasonableness, unprofitableness, and other aggravations; what it is that they do against God and themselves. For the manner, the following directions may be here applied.

10. The next part of our oversight lies in the use of church discipline; which, after the aforesaid private reproofs, consists: In more public reproof—persuading the person to suitable expressions of repentance—praying for them—restoring the penitent—excluding and avoiding the impenitent. (1.) And for reproof, these things must be observed: that the accusations of none, no, not the most respectable and best in the church, be taken without proof, nor rashly entertained, nor that a minister should make himself a party till he have sufficient evidence of the case. It is better to let many vicious persons go unpunished,

or uncensured, when we want full evidence, than to censure one unjustly, which we may easily do if we go upon presumptions, which is sure to bring on the pastors the scandal of partiality, and of unrighteous and injurious dealing, and thereby cause all their reproofs and censures to become contemptible. (2.) Let there be therefore a less public meeting of chosen persons (the officers and some delegates of the church on their behalf) to have the hearing of all such cases before they be made more public. Once a month, at a set place, they may come together to receive whatever charge shall be brought against any member of the church, that it may be considered whether it be just, and the offender may be spoken to then; and if the fault be either less public, or less heinous, so that a less public profession of repentance may satisfy, then, if the party shall there profess repentance, it may suffice. (3.) But if it be not so, or if the party remain impenitent, he must be reproved before all, and there again invited to repentance. This duty is not the less because our brethren have made so little conscience of the practice of it. It is not only Christ's command to *tell the church*, but Paul's to *rebuke such before all;* and the church had constantly practised it till selfishness and formality caused them to be remiss in this and other duties together; and the Reformers have as much stood up for it as the rest; yea, and we are as deeply engaged by vows, covenants, prayers, and other means, for the execution of it, as any who have gone before us. Austin says, "Those sins which are committed before all, must be reproved before all, that all may fear. Reprove in secret them who offend thee in secret; for if thou alone knowest the guilty person, and would reprove him before others, thou art not a corrector, but a betrayer." Gregory the Great, in his register, says, "Public sins are not to be done away by private correction: but they who offend openly must be openly reproved; that, while they are amended by public reproof, others, who have transgressed by imitating them, may be corrected;

for, while one is reproved, many are amended; and it is better that one should be condemned for the safety of many, than that many should be exposed to danger through the licentiousness of one." Isidore says, "He who, when admonished privately, does not amend of his fault, must be publicly reproved; so that the wound which could not be healed privately must be cured in public." If any one say we shall thus be guilty of defaming men by publishing their crimes; I answer, in the words of Bernard, "When vice is found fault with, and thence a scandal ariseth, he himself is the cause of the scandal, who did that which ought to be reproved, not he who gave the reproof. Therefore fear not that you act contrary to charity, when you punish the offence of one according as it deserves, for the peace of many; for it is better that one should perish than that unity be destroyed." There is no room for a doubt whether this be our duty, or whether we are unfaithful as to the performance of it. I fear many of us, who would be ashamed to omit preaching or praying, do not consider what we have done by living in the wilful neglect of this duty and the rest of discipline so long. We little think how we have drawn the guilt of swearing, and drunkenness, and fornication, and other crimes, upon our own heads, for want of using God's means for the cure of them. As Gregory says, "He who does not correct things which ought to be done away, commits them; and he incurs the guilt of a perpetrator who neglects to amend what he might correct." Another says, "If you know me to have done any thing improperly or wickedly, and do not blame me for it, you yourself are to be reproved." Plaut.

If any say, "There is little probability that public personal reprehension should do good to them, because they will be enraged by the shame," I answer, [1.] Philo, a Jew, could say, (de Sacrif. Abel and Cain,) "We must endeavour, as far as we are able, to save those from their sins that shall certainly perish; imitating good physicians, who, when they cannot save

a sick man, do yet willingly try all means for cure, lest they seem to want success through their own negligence." [2.] It ill becomes creatures to represent the ordinances of God as useless, or to reproach his service instead of doing it, and set their wits against their Maker. God can make use of his own ordinances, or else he never would have appointed them. [3.] The usefulness of this discipline is apparent, because it defames sin, and humbles the sinner; and manifests the holiness of Christ, his doctrine, and his church, before all the world. [4.] What would you do with such sinners; give them up as hopeless? That would be too cruel. Would you use other means? Why, is it supposed that all others have been used without success; for this is the last remedy. [5.] The church of Christ found sufficient reason to use this course, even in times of persecution, when our carnal reason would have told them that they should then, above all times, have forborne it, for fear of driving away all their converts. [6.] The principal use of this public discipline is not for the offender himself, but for the church. It tends exceedingly to deter others from the like crimes, and keep pure the congregations and their worship. Seneca could say, "He transmits vice to posterity who pardons present faults:" and elsewhere, "He hurts the good who spares the wicked." If you say that it will but restrain them as hypocrites, and not convert them; I answer, it may preserve others; and who knows how God may bless his ordinance, even to those concerned. The restraint of sin is also a benefit not to be contemned. "I will dare (said Seneca the moralist) to show the offender his faults: if I cannot totally destroy his vices, I will restrain them. They may not totally end, but they may cease for a time; and perhaps, by a habit of ceasing some time, they may end at last."

After the duty of public reproof, the person or persons must be exhorted to repentance, and to the public profession of it for the satisfaction of the church:

for as the church is bound to avoid communion with impenitent and scandalous sinners, so when they have had the evidence of their sin, they must see some evidence of their repentance; for we cannot know them to be penitent without evidence; and what evidence is the church capable of, but their profession of repentance first, and their actual reformation afterwards? Both of which must be expected.

To these may most fitly be adjoined the public prayers of the church, and that both for the reproved before they are rejected, and for the rejected, that they may repent and be restored. But we are now upon the former. Though this is not expressly affixed to discipline, yet we have sufficient discovery of God's will concerning it in the general precepts. We are commanded to *pray always*, and in *all things*, and for *all men*, and *in all places*, and *all things* are said to be *sanctified by it.* It is plain therefore that such a great business as this should not be done without prayer. And who can have any just reason to be offended with us, if we pray to God to change their hearts, and pardon their sins. It is therefore, in my judgment, a very laudable practice of those churches which for the three next days desire the congregation to join in earnest prayer to God for the opening of the sinner's eyes, softening of his heart, and saving him from impenitence and eternal death! And though we have no express direction in Scripture just how long we shall stay, to try whether the sinner be so impenitent as to be necessarily excluded, yet we must follow the general directions, with such diversity as the case and quality of the person and former proceeding shall require, it being left to the discretion of the church, who are in general to stay till the person manifest himself obstinate in his sin: not but that a temporary exclusion, called suspension, may often be inflicted in the mean time: but before we proceed to an exclusion *à statu*, it is highly proper in most cases that prayer be made for three days, and patience exercised towards him who is to be excluded.

And indeed I see no reason why this course should not be much more frequent than it is; and that not only with regard to those who are members of our special charge, and consent to discipline, but even those who deny our pastoral oversight and discipline, and yet are our ordinary hearers. For so far as men have Christian communion, or familiarity with us, so far are they capable of being excluded from that communion. Though the members of our special charge have more full and special communion, and so are capable of a more full and special exclusion; yet all those who dwell among us, and are our ordinary hearers, have some communion. For as they converse with us, so they hear the word, not as heathens, but as Christians, and members of the universal church into which they had been baptized: and they join with us in public prayers and praises, and in the celebration of the Lord's day. From this therefore they are capable of being excluded, or from part of this, at least morally, if not locally. For the precept of *avoiding*, and *withdrawing from* and *not eating with such*, is not restrained to the members of a governed church, but extended to all Christians who are capable of communion.

When these ungodly persons are sick, we have daily bills from them to request the prayers of the congregation: and if we must pray for them against sickness and temporal death, I know no reason why we should not much more earnestly pray for them against sin and eternal death. That we have not their consent is no reason: for that is their sin and disease; and we do not consider it sober arguing to say, "I may not pray for such a man against his sickness, because he is sick;" or, "if he were not sick, I would pray against his sickness." No more is it to say, "If he were not impenitent so as to refuse our prayers, I would pray that he might be saved from his impenitence." I confess I do not consider myself to have so strict a charge over this sort of men, who renounce my oversight, as over those who own it;

and that is the reason why I have not called more of them to public repentance, because it requires in general more time to examine the matter of fact, and to deal with the person first in private, that his impenitence may be discerned, than I can possibly spare from the duties which I owe to my special charge, to whom I am more indebted. But though I cannot use any such discipline on all that sort, nor am so much obliged to do it, yet some of them who are most notoriously and openly wicked, where less proof and shorter debates are requisite, I intend to deal thus with hereafter, having found some success in that way already. But specially to all those whom we take for members of that particular church of which we are pastors, there is no question but this is our duty. And therefore where the whole parish are members, discipline must be exercised on the whole.

I confess much prudence is necessary in such proceedings, lest we do more hurt than good; but it must be Christian prudence that orders duties, and suits them to their ends, and not such carnal prudence as shall enervate or exclude them. It may be fit therefore for younger ministers to consult with others, for the more cautious proceeding in such works. And in the performance of it we should deal humbly even when we deal most sharply, and make it appear that it is not from any lordly disposition, nor an act of revenge for any injury, but a necessary duty which we cannot conscientiously avoid: and therefore it will be meet that we disclaim all such animosities, and show the people the commands of God, obliging us to what we do.

"Neighbours and brethren, sin is so hateful an evil in the eyes of the most holy God, how light soever impenitent sinners make of it, that he has provided the everlasting torments of hell for the punishment thereof; and no less means could prevent that punishment than the sacrifice of the blood of the Son of God, applied to those who truly repent and forsake their sins; and therefore God, who calls all men to

repentance, has commanded us to exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; and that we do not hate our brother in our heart, but in any wise rebuke our neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him; and that if our brother offend us, we should tell him his fault between him and us alone; and if he hear not, take two or three; and if he hear not them, tell the church; and if he hear not the church, he must be to us as a heathen or a publican; and those who sin we must rebuke before all, that others may fear; and rebuke with all authority; yea, were it an apostle of Christ that should openly sin, he must be openly reproved, as Paul did Peter; and if they repent not, we must avoid them, and with such not so much as eat.* According to these commands of the Lord, having heard of the scandalous practices of N. N. of this church, or society, and having received sufficient proof that he has committed the odious sin of .....; we have seriously dealt with him to bring him to repentance, but to the grief of our hearts perceive no satisfactory success of our endeavours—he still remains impenitent, or still lives in the same sin, though he verbally profess repentance. We do therefore judge it our necessary duty to proceed to the use of that farther remedy which Christ has commanded us to try; and hence we desire him in the name of the Lord, without any farther delay, to lay aside his obstinacy against the Lord, and to submit to his rebuke, and lay to heart the greatness of his sin, the wrong he has done to Christ and to himself, and the scandal and grief that he has caused to others; and how unable he is to contend with the Almighty, and prevail against the holy God, who to the impenitent is a consuming fire; or how he can save himself from his fiery indignation! And I earnestly beseech him, for the sake of his own soul, that he will but soberly consider what he can

* Heb. iii, 13; Lev. xix, 17; Matt. xviii, 17; 1 Tim. v, 20. Titus i, 15; Gal. ii, 11, 14; 2 Thess. iii, 6, 12, 14; 1 Cor. v, 11, 13.

gain by his sin and impenitence; whether it will pay for the loss of everlasting life, and how he thinks to stand before God in judgment, or appear before the Lord Jesus when death shall snatch his soul from his body, if he be found in this impenitent state? when the Lord Jesus himself, in whose blood they pretend to trust, hath told such with his own mouth, that except they repent, they all shall perish. And I beseech him, for the sake of his own soul, and as a messenger of Jesus Christ, require him, as he will answer the contrary at the bar of God, that he lay by the stoutness and impenitence of his heart, and unfeignedly confess and lament his sin before God and this congregation! And this desire I here publish, not out of any ill will to his person, as the Lord knows, but out of love to his soul, and in obedience to Christ, who has made it my duty; desiring that, if it be possible, he may be saved from his sin, from the power of Satan, and from the everlasting wrath of God, and may be reconciled to God and to his church; and, therefore, that he may be humbled by true contrition, before he be humbled by remediless condemnation."

Thus, or to this purpose, I conceive our public admonition should proceed; and in some cases, where the sinner looks upon his sin as small, the aggravation of it will be necessary, especially the citing of some texts of Scripture to that purpose.

And in case he either will not be present, that such admonition may be given him, or will not be brought to a discovery of repentance, and to desire the prayers of the congregation, it will be necessary that, with such a preface as this already expressed, we desire the prayers of the congregation for him ourselves; that the people would consider what a fearful condition the impenitent are in, and have pity on a poor soul that is so blinded and hardened by sin and Satan, that he cannot pity himself; and think what it is for a man to appear before the living God in such a case; and therefore that they would join in earnest prayer to God,

that he would open his eyes, and soften and humble his stubborn heart, before he be beyond remedy: and accordingly let us be very earnest in prayer for such, that the congregation may be provoked affectionately to join with us; and who knows but God may hear our prayers, and cause the sinner's heart to relent. However, the people will perceive that we do not make light of sin, nor preach to them from mere custom or formality. If ministers would be conscientious in thus carrying on the entire work of God *self-denyingly*, they might make something of it, and expect a greater blessing. But when we shrink from all that is dangerous or ungrateful, and shift off all that is costly or troublesome, we cannot expect that any great matter should be done by such a carnal, partial use of means; and though some may be here and there called home to God, yet we cannot expect that the gospel should prevail, and run, and be glorified, where it is so lamely and defectively carried on.

When a sinner is thus admonished and prayed for, if it please the Lord to open his eyes and give him remorse, before we proceed to any farther censure, it is our next duty to proceed to his full recovery, where these things must be observed. (1.) That we do not discourage him by too much severity, nor yet by too much lenity make nothing of discipline, nor help him to any saving cure; but merely slubber it over. If therefore he have sinned scandalously but once, if his repentance seem deep and serious, we may in some cases restore him at that time; that is, if the wound he has given to the credit of the church be not so deep as to require more ado for satisfaction, or the sin so heinous as may cause us to delay. But if it be so, or if he have lived long in the sin, it is most proper that he wait in patience a convenient time before he be restored. (2.) And when the time comes, whether at the first confession or after, it is meet that we urge him to be serious in his humiliation, and set at home upon his conscience, till he seem to be truly sensible of his sin; for it is not a vain formality, but the re-

covery and saving of a soul, that we expect and labour for. (3.) We must see that he beg the communion of the church, and their prayers to God for his pardon and salvation. (4.) And that he promise to flee from such sins for the time to come, and watch more narrowly, and walk more circumspectly. (5.) Then we have these things more to do: To assure him of the riches of God's love, and the sufficiency of Christ's blood to pardon and wash away his sins; and that, if his repentance be sincere, the Lord pardons him, of which we are authorized as his messengers to assure him: to charge him to persevere and perform his promises, avoid temptations, and continue to beg mercy and strengthening grace: to charge the church that they imitate Christ in forgiving, and retain (or, if he were cast out, receive) the penitent person into their communion, and that they never reproach him with his sins, nor cast them in his teeth, but forgive and forget them as Christ does.

The next part of discipline, is the rejecting and removing from the church's communion those who, after sufficient trial, remain impenitent; where note, (1.) That if a man have sinned but once in a scandalous manner, it is only a profession of repentance that we can expect for our satisfaction; but if he be accustomed to sin, or have often broke such promises, then it is an actual reformation that we must expect. And therefore he who will refuse either to reform, or to profess and manifest repentance, is to be taken by us as living in his sin; for a heinous sin but once committed is morally continued in till it be repented of, and a bare forbearing of the act is not sufficient. (2.) Yet have we no warrant to rip up matters that are worn out of the public memory, and so make that public again which has ceased to be so, at least not in ordinary cases. (3.) Exclusion from church communion, commonly called excommunication, is of divers sorts, or degrees, more than two or three, which are not to be confounded; of which I shall not now treat. (4.) That which we are most commonly called

to practise is, only to remove an impenitent sinner from our communion, till it shall please the Lord to give him repentance. (5.) In this exclusion, or removal, the minister, or governors of that church, are authoritatively to charge the people in the name of the Lord to avoid communion with him, and to pronounce him one whose communion the church is bound to avoid; and the people's duty is obediently to avoid him, in case the pastor's charge contradict not the word of God. So that he has the guiding or governing power; and they have a discerning power, whether his charge be just; and an executive power, for it is they that must execute the sentence in part by avoiding the rejected, as he himself must execute it by denying him those church ordinances and privileges whereof he is the administrator. (6.) It is very convenient to pray for the repentance and restoration of the person or persons excommunicated. (7.) And if God shall give them repentance, they are gladly to be received into the communion of the church again.

Of the manner of all these I shall say no more, so much having been said of them already; and for the manner of other particular duties, of which I have said little or nothing, you have much already, particularly in the Directory of the late Assembly.

O that we were but so far faithful in the practice of this discipline, as we are satisfied both of its matter and manner; and did not reproach it by our negligence, while we write and plead for it with the highest commendations. It is worthy our consideration, who are likely to have the heaviest charge concerning this matter at the bar of God? Whether those deluded ones who have reproached and hindered discipline by their tongues, because they knew not its nature and necessity; or we who have vilified it by our constant omission, while with our tongues we have magnified it? If hypocrisy be no sin, or if the knowledge of our Master's will be no aggravation of the evil of disobedience, then are we in a better case than they. I will not advise the zealous maintainers and obstinate

neglecters and rejecters of discipline to unsay all that they have said, till they are ready to do as they say; nor to recant their defences of discipline, till they mean to practise it; nor to burn all the books that they have written in favour of it, and all the records of their costs and hazards, lest they rise up in judgment against them to their confusion. But I would persuade them without farther delay to conform their practice to these testimonies which they have given, lest the more they are proved to have commended discipline, the more they be proved to have condemned themselves, for neglecting it.

I have often marvelled that the men who have been much offended at the books that have been written for free admission to the Lord's supper, or for mixed communion in that one part, have not been more offended at as free admission to other parts of church communion. I should think that it is a greater profanation to permit an obstinate, scandalous sinner, to be a stated member of that particular church, without first private, and then public admonition, prayer for him, or censure of him; than for a single pastor to admit him to the Lord's supper, if he have no power to censure him, as these suppose. I should think that the faithful practice of discipline in the other parts would soon put an end to the controversy about free admission to the Lord's supper, and heal the hurt which such discourses have done to our people. For those discourses have more modesty than to plead for a free admission of those who are already censured or rejected; but only of those who have yet their standing in that church, and are not censured. And if, when they forfeit their title to church communion, we would deal with them in Christ's appointed way, till we had either reclaimed them to repentance or censured them to be avoided, it would be past controversy then that they were not to be admitted to that one act of communion in the supper who are justly excluded from the whole. But as long as we leave them uncensured members, and tell a single pastor that he has no power

to censure them, we tempt him to think that he has no power then to deny them that communion with the body which is the common privilege of all uncensured members.

And as we thus ourselves oppose discipline in part, or cherish church corruption in part, one party being for the free admission of them, while members, to the sacraments, and the other as freely permitting them to enjoy other parts of church communion, while they exclude them from the sacrament; so some have learned to tie these ends together, and, by holding both, set open the doors of church and chancel, pluck up the hedge, and lay the vineyard common to the wilderness. It has somewhat amazed me to hear some, whom I took for reverend and godly divines, reproach as a sect the sacramentarians and disciplinarians! And when I desired to know who they meant, they told me, them who will not give the sacrament to all the parish, and make distinction by their discipline. I thought the tempter had obtained a great victory if he had but got one godly pastor of a church to neglect discipline, as well as if he had got him to neglect preaching; much more if he had got him to approve of that neglect: but it seems he has got some to scorn at the performers of the duty which they neglect. As the ungodly were wont to reproach the diligent by the name of Puritans, so do these reproach the faithful pastors by the name of disciplinarians. I could wish they would remember what the ancient reproaches were, both symptomatically and effectively, and accordingly judge impartially of themselves, and fear a participation of the judgment that befell them. Sure I am, if it were well understood how much of the pastoral authority and work consists in church guidance, it would be also discerned, that to be against discipline is *tantum non* to be against the ministry; and to be against the ministry is *tantum non* to be absolutely against the church; and to be against the church is near to being absolutely against Christ. Blame not the harshness of the inference till

you can avoid it, and free yourselves from the charge of it before the Lord. Was not Christ himself the leader of these disciplinarians, who instituted discipline, and made his ministers the rulers or guides of his church, and put the keys of the kingdom into their hands; commanded the very particular acts of discipline, and required the people to submit to them, and obey them in the Lord? What would these men have said, if they had seen the practice of the ancient church for many hundred years after Christ, who exercised a discipline so much more rigorous than any among us do, and that even in the heat of heathen persecutions; which, if they read only the ancient canons, and Cyprian's epistles, they may soon see, though they look no farther.* And it was not then, no, nor after,

* "*Excommunication* in the *primitive church* was intended to bring men to *submission*; upon which they were gradually received as they passed through the several courses of penitential discipline assigned them.

"When a crime was known to have been committed, which was thought to deserve a censure, if the party came not of his own accord, he was convened by the bishop, first in secret; and if he thereupon submitted and reformed, all was well; otherwise he was admonished and persuaded in the presence of two or three witnesses: and if those endeavours also proved ineffectual, the whole church was made acquainted with his case, and interested in it; and then, if, after all, he continued obstinate, the highest sentence of excommunication was finally pronounced against him, under which he continued as much disregarded as a mere heathen, till he was softened into submission, and bent to discipline: and when he so submitted, there were various degrees of penance assigned him, in proportion to his crime. As he was first received into the church through the door of *baptism*, so in this case he was restored to it through a course of penitential discipline; the constituent parts of which were, *confession*, *segregation*, and *absolution*.

"The church was willing to convince her enemies, that she did not intend by her mildness to encourage sin; that she did not easily admit to her communion such as *walked disorderly;* and therefore, that the extraordinary contrition of the penitent did not mollify the execution of his sentence; but he was to continue in some cases *three*, in some *nine*, and in others above *twenty* years in a state of segregation. Hence we learn, that when sins were committed which were thought to deserve an ecclesiastical censure, the consequence was a separation of the delinquent from the rest of the assembly in public worship. He had a peculiar station assigned him, and was to leave the congregation when the hymns, lessons, lectures, and prayers for the catechumens were despatched: but before he departed, a solemn prayer was put up to God for *him*,

under Christian magistrates, taken to be a useless thing; nor would it appear such now, if it were displayed in

and for all in his circumstances and station, and also an imposition of the chief minister's hands upon him.

"This, indeed, and this alone, seems to have been originally the proper station of penitents, and was called *prostration*. They were considered as such when within this class; and the church unquestionably *then* took notice of them, as of persons under its care. Heathens might stand without the church door, or just within it, as hearers, if they pleased, while the hymns were sung, the Scriptures read, or the sermon preached by the bishop, or any of his presbyters.

"Now the excommunicates were, I presume, in this respect, upon the same footing with heathens; and both alike might enter the church thus far, while they both were alike considered. But when the party excommunicated was softened into submission, he was longer in *recovering* the privileges he had forfeited, than he was at first in *gaining* them; nor could he be readmitted to communion upon such easy terms as those on which he was first admitted. Hence the penitent passed through more stages, and was longer detained from communion, than the catechumen. As he had contracted more guilt, by abusing his knowledge of the gospel, he was obliged to submit to a longer separation, and to pass through more degrees of it, than even a heathen; and, therefore, while the one was allowed to enter the church as a hearer, the other was for some time detained at the church door, and was not permitted to proceed beyond it.

"*Basil* himself, who lived in the middle of the fourth century, hath lineally described to us all the stations of penance, which, by that time, were got into full and current use; since he does not recite them as novel practices, but as the established rules of the then prevailing discipline. The case he mentions was of such as had offended by incontinence, who, for the first year, were to be excluded entirely from the whole service, and to stand weeping at the church door, begging the prayers of the ministers and people: this was the station of *mourners*. In the second year they were admitted to that of *hearers;* in the third, to that of the *prostrate*, called, by way of eminence, *the penance;* in the fourth, they were permitted to stand with the *faithful*, while they communicated, but might not partake with them: this I have termed the *station* of *consistentes*, or *by-standers*. Thus, at last, they were restored in full to all their privileges, and allowed to communicate. Not that all these stages were in every case necessary to be passed through; no, but according to the nature and quality of the sin, as it was more or less enormous, the offender was directed to stand from the very first, either among the *mourners* or *hearers*, or among the *prostrate;* whereas, sometimes they were permitted to skip all these three, and only to *stand by* the *faithful*, while they communicated, without being allowed to join with them. This was the station which was next in order to that of full communion."—See *The Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church, by a Presbyter of the Church of England.*

its strength and beauty by a vigorous practice: for it is a thing that is not effectually manifested to the ear, but to the eye; and you will never make men know well what it is by mere talking of it—till they see it,

"The way of punishing by excommunication was not originally instituted by our Lord, or his apostles, but had been anciently practised among the Jews. It was variously expressed by ancient writers. Such persons were said to be *separated* from the body of Christ, to be *wholly cut off* from communion, to be *thrown* out of the church, and to be *anathematized*. This *separation*, and the *penance* that accompanied it, was greater or smaller, longer or shorter, according to the nature of the crime; sometimes two, three, ten, fifteen, twenty, or thirty years, and sometimes for the whole life; nay, in some cases, it was not taken off at death, but persons were left to the judgment of God, without any *testimony* of their reconciliation to the church: though herein the severity was mitigated, not only by private bishops, but by the great Council of *Nice*, which ordained that penitent persons should not be denied the communion at the hour of death. If the person offending happened to be in *orders*, he forfeited his ministry; and though on his repentance he was restored to communion, yet it was only as a *lay person*; for he never recovered the honour and dignity of his office. Thus *Cornelius*, bishop of Rome, giving *Fabius*, of Antioch, an account of the clandestine and schismatical ordination of *Novatian*, tells him that one of the bishops who ordained him returned after to the church, bewailing his offence with tears in his eyes, whom, at the instance of the people, he received into lay communion. *Cyprian*, writing about this very case, relates of *Trophemus*, (who was either the bishop mentioned by *Cornelius*, or one of his colleagues,) that, returning to the church with great demonstrations of repentance, he was readmitted, but no otherwise than in the capacity of a layman. And, speaking elsewhere of *Basilides's* repentance, he tells us, he had no thoughts of retaining his bishopric, declaring he was very well dealt with, if, upon his repentance, he might but communicate as a *laick*, and be received among the number of the *faithful*. This, *St. Basil* tells us, was an ancient canon and practice of the church; and accordingly ordains, that a *deacon* guilty of fornication should be deposed from his office; and, being thrust down into the rank of the *laity*, should in that quality be admitted to the communion."—See *Cave's Primitive Christianity*.

It will probably be objected, that they went far into the extreme of severity in the exercise of church discipline. Perhaps in some respects they did; but do not we go as far in many respects into the opposite extreme? And was not theirs the safest of the two? Did it not manifest a greater concern for souls, and tend more to preserve the peace and purity of the church?—But suppose they carried it to an extreme, there is no necessity that we should. There is a plain and broad medium. Let us follow the Scripture rule—go as far as the word of God authorizes us, and we are sure to be safe.

they will be strangers to it. As it is in the military art, in navigation, and in the government of commonwealths, which are so little known till learned by experience.

I know that when the church began to be tainted with vain inventions, the word *discipline* began to have another signification, suited to their own various rules of life and austere impositions, of *touch not, taste not, handle not;* but it is the ancient and truly Christian discipline that I am contending for. So much for the acts of pastoral oversight.

From what has been said, we may see that the pastoral office is another kind of thing than those men have taken it to be, who think that it consists in preaching and administering sacraments only; much more than they have taken it for, who think it consists in making new laws or canons to bind the church, as if God had not made us laws sufficient; and as if he had committed the proper legislative power over his church to ministers or bishops, whose office is but to expound, and apply, and execute in their places the laws of Christ.

CHAPTER III.

Of the manner and concomitants of our work. It must be done purely for God—Laboriously and diligently—Prudently and orderly—We must insist most on the greatest and most necessary things—With plainness and evidence—In a sense of our insufficiency and dependance on Christ—In humility and condescension—With a mixture of severity and mildness—With affectionate seriousness—Reverently and spiritually—In tender love to our people—Patiently—And with an earnest desire of union among ourselves, and of the unity and peace of the church.

HAVING spoken of the matter of our work, we are next to speak of the *manner;* not of each part distinctly, but of the whole in general, especially with reference to the principal part.

1. The ministerial work must be managed purely for God and the salvation of the people, and not for any private ends of our own. A wrong end mars all the work as from us, how good soever in itself. It is not serving God, but ourselves, if we do it not for God, but for ourselves. They who set about this as a common work, to make a trade of it for their worldly livelihood, will find that they have chosen a bad trade, though a good employment. Self-denial is of absolute necessity in every Christian, but of a double necessity in a minister, as he has a double sanctification and dedication to God. Without self-denial he cannot do God an hour's faithful service. Hard studies, much knowledge, and excellent preaching are but more glorious and hypocritical sinning, if the end be not right. The saying of Bernard is commonly known: "There are some who desire to acquire knowledge only for this end, that they may know; and this is base curiosity. Others desire to have it that they may sell it; and this is base gain. Others desire to have it that they themselves may be known; and this is base vanity. But there are others also who desire to have it that they may edify; and this is charity. And there are others who desire it that they may be edified; and this is wisdom."

2. This work must be managed laboriously and diligently, being of such unspeakable consequence both to others and ourselves. We are seeking to uphold the world, to save it from the curse of God, to perfect the creation, to attain the ends of Christ's redemption, to save ourselves and others from damnation, to overcome the devil and demolish his kingdom, to set up the kingdom of Christ, and attain and help others to eternal glory. And are these works to be done with a careless mind or a slack hand? O see then that this work be done with all your might! Study hard, for the well is deep and our brains are shallow. But especially be laborious in practice, and in the exercise of your knowledge. Let Paul's words ring in your ears continually: "Necessity is laid upon

me, and wo unto me if I preach not the gospel!" Still think with yourselves what lies upon your hands. If I do not bestir me, Satan may prevail, and the people everlastingly perish, and their blood be required at my hands. By avoiding labour and suffering, I shall draw on me a thousand times more than I avoid: for, as Bernard says, "They who are not engaged in the work of men will surely be engaged in the work of devils;" whereas by present diligence you prepare for future blessedness: and, as Gregory in his morals says, "As many labours as you now manifest for the truth, so many pledges likewise of recompense do you retain with a full expectation." No man was ever a loser by God.

3. This work must be carried on prudently, orderly, and by degrees. Milk must go before strong meat: the foundation must be laid before we build upon it. Children must not be dealt with like adults. Men must be brought into a state of grace before we can expect from them the works of grace. The work of conversion, and repentance from dead works, and faith in Christ, must be first, frequently, and thoroughly taught. The stewards of God's household must give to each their portion in due season. We must not go beyond the capacities of our people, nor teach them perfection who have not learned the first principles. As Augustine says, "If an infant be nourished according to his strength, it will be able to take in more as it grows; but if it exceed what it is capable to bear, it will decrease rather than increase." And as Gregory Nyssen says, "As we teach not infants the deep precepts of science, but first letters, and then syllables, so also the guides of the church do first propound to their hearers certain documents, which are as the elements; and so by degrees open to them the more perfect and mysterious matters." Therefore did the church take so much pains with their catechumens before they baptized them, and would not lay unpolished stones into the building.

4. Through the whole course of our ministry we

must insist most upon the greatest, most certain, and necessary things, and be more seldom and sparing upon the rest. If we can but teach Christ to our people, we teach them all. Get them well to heaven, and they will have knowledge enough. The great and commonly acknowledged truths are those that men must live upon, and are the great instruments of raising the heart to God, and destroying men's sins; and therefore we must still have our people's necessities in our eyes. It will make us disregard needless ornaments and unprofitable controversies to remember that *one* thing is necessary. Other things are desirable to be known; but these things *must* be known, or else our people are undone for ever. I confess I think necessity should be a great disposer of a minister's course of study and labour. If we were sufficient for every thing, we might fall upon every thing, and take in order the whole encyclopædia: but life is short, and we are dull; eternal things are necessary, and the souls that depend on our teaching are precious. I confess necessity has been the conductor of my studies and life: it chooses what book I shall read, and tells when and how long; it chooses my text, and makes my sermon for matter and manner. Though I know the constant expectation of death has been a great cause of this, yet I know no reason why the most healthy man should not make sure of the *necessaries* first, considering the uncertainty and shortness of all men's lives. Xenophon thought "there was no better teacher than necessity, which teaches all things most diligently." Curtius says, "Necessity is more effectual than any art." Who can in study, preaching, or life, be doing other matters, if he do but know that *this must be done?* Who can trifle or delay, that feels the spurs of hasty necessity? As the soldier says, "We must not stand long disputing; but immediately and courageously fight when necessity requires it." So much more must we, as our business is more important. And doubtless this is the best way to redeem time, and see that we lose not

an hour, when we spend it only on necessary things: it is also the way to be most profitable to others, though not always to be most pleasing and applauded. Hence it is that a preacher must be often upon the same things, because the matters of necessity are few. We must not either feign necessaries, nor dwell much upon unnecessaries, to satisfy those who are fond of novelties; though we must clothe the same necessaries with a grateful variety in the manner of our delivery. The great volumes and tedious controversies that so much trouble us, and waste our time, are usually made up more of opinion than necessary truths. Necessaries are common and obvious: they are superfluities for which we waste our time and labour, and complain that we attain them not. Ministers therefore must carefully observe the state of their flocks, that they may know what is most necessary for them, both for matter and for manner: and matter is usually first to be regarded, as being of more importance than the manner. If you are to choose what authors to read yourselves, will you not rather take those that tell you what you know not, and speak needful truth most evidently, though it should be in uncouth language, than those who most learnedly and elegantly tell you what is false or vain, and, after much ado, say nothing? I purpose to follow Austin's counsel, "in preferring sentiment to words, as the mind is preferred to the body. Hence it is that I would rather have speeches which are true, than those which contain nice distinctions; as I would rather have my friends wise than handsome." And surely as I do in my studies, for my own edification, I should do in my teaching for that of other men. It is commonly empty and ignorant men, who want the matter and substance of true learning, that are over-curious and solicitous about words and ornaments, when the aged, experienced, and most learned men abound in substantial truths delivered in the plainest dress.

5. All our teaching must be as plain and evident as we can make it; for this best suits a teacher's design,

He that would be understood must speak to the capacity of his hearers, and make it his business to make himself understood. Truth loves the light, and is most beautiful when most naked. It is a sign of an envious enemy to hide the truth; and a sign of a hypocrite to do this under pretence of revealing it: and therefore painted obscure sermons, like the painted glass in the windows that keeps out the light, are too often the marks of painted hypocrites. If you do not wish to teach men, what business have you in the pulpit? If you do, why do you not speak so as to be understood? I know the height of the matter may prevent a man from being understood, though he have studied to make it as plain as he can; but to cloud the matter in strange words, and hide his mind from the people whom he pretends to instruct, is the way to make fools admire his profound learning, and wise men his folly, pride, and hypocrisy. And usually it is a suspicious sign of some false doctrine that needs such a cloak, and must walk thus masked in the open day. Thus did the followers of Basilides, and Valentinus, and others among the old heretics; and thus do the Behmenists and other Paracelsians now, who, when they have spoken in such a way that few understand them, lest they expose their errors to open view, they pretend a necessity for it, because of men's prejudices, and the unpreparedness of common understandings for the truth. But truth overcomes prejudice by mere light of evidence; and there is no better way to make a good cause prevail, than to make it as plain and thoroughly known as we can; and this light most effectually disposes unprepared minds for receiving the truth. At best it is a sign that he has not well digested the matter himself, who is not able to deliver it plainly to another. I mean as plainly as the nature of the matter will admit, in regard to capacities prepared for it by prerequisite truths. For I know that some men cannot at present understand some truths, though you speak them as plainly, as words can express them: as the easiest rules in gram-

mar, most plainly taught, cannot be understood by a child that is but learning his alphabet.

6. Our whole work must be carried on in a sense of our insufficiency, and in a pious, believing dependance upon Christ. We must go to him for light, and life, and strength, who has called us to the work: and when we feel our faith weak, and our hearts dull, and unsuitable to the great work we have to do, we must have recourse to him, and say, "Lord, wilt thou send me with such an unbelieving heart to persuade others to believe? Must I daily and earnestly plead with sinners about everlasting life and death, and have no more belief and feeling of these weighty things myself? O send me not naked and unprovided for the work; but, as thou commandest me to do it, furnish me with a spirit suitable thereto." As Austin says, "A preacher must labour to be heard understandingly, willingly, and obediently; and let him not doubt but he will effect this more by pious prayers than by the power of oratory; so that by praying for himself and others whom he is about to address, he may be a petitioner before he is a teacher: and at the very time when he is coming, before he goes out, let him raise his voice to God, and lift his soul with fervent desire." Prayer must carry on our work, as well as preaching. He does not preach heartily to his people who does not pray for them. If we do not prevail with God to give them repentance and faith, we are not likely to prevail with them to repent and believe. Paul gives us frequently his example of praying night and day for his hearers. When our own hearts are out of order, and theirs too, if we do not prevail with God to mend and help them, we are likely to be very unsuccessful in our work.

7. Our work must also be managed with great humility. We must carry ourselves meekly and condescendingly to all; and so teach others as to be ready to learn of any who can teach us, and thereby both teach and learn at once: not proudly venting our own conceits, and disdaining all that any way contradict

them, as if we had attained to the top of knowledge, and were destined for the chair, and other men only to sit at our feet. Pride is a vice that ill becomes them who must lead men in such an humble way to heaven. They must also take heed, lest, when they have brought others thither, the gate should prove too strait for themselves. For, as Hugo says, "Pride was produced in heaven: but, as it had forgot the way by which it fell from thence, it can never return thither again." God, who thrust out a proud angel, will not entertain a proud preacher. Methinks we should remember at least the title of a minister, which, though the popish priests disdain, yet we do not. It is indeed this pride at the root that feeds all the rest of our sins. Hence the envy, the contention, and unpeaceableness of ministers, and hence the hinderances in all reformation. All want to lead, and few will follow or concur. Yea, hence are the schisms and apostacies, as have been former persecutions, arrogant usurpations and impositions. And the same may be said of other vices, which often revive when they seemed dead, because pride was unmortified, which virtually contains them all. Hence also the non-proficiency of too many ministers, because they are too proud to learn. But I may say of ministers as Augustine to Jerome,—even the aged of them: "Although it is more fit that old men should teach than learn, yet it is more fit that they should learn than be ignorant." Humility would teach them another lesson; as Hugo says, "Willingly learn of all what you are ignorant of, because humility will make that common to you which nature has made peculiar to every one. You will be wiser than all, if you are willing to learn from all. They who receive from all become richer than all."

8. There must be a prudent mixture of severity and mildness, both in our preaching and discipline: each must be predominant according to the quality of the person or matter that we have in hand. If there be *no* severity, there will be contempt of our reproofs.

If *all* severity, we shall be taken as usurpers of dominion, rather than persuaders of the minds of men to the truth.

9. We must be sincerely affectionate, serious, and zealous, in all our public and private exhortations. The weight of our matter condemns coldness and sleepy dulness. We should see that we be well awake ourselves, and our spirits in such a state as may make us fit to awaken others. As Gregory says, "We should be like the cock, who, when he is preparing to crow, first wisely claps his wings, and by striking his side renders himself more vigilant. So preachers, when they are about to deliver the word in public, should first employ themselves in holy exercises." If our words be not sharpened, and pierce as nails, they will hardly be felt by stony hearts. To speak coldly and slightly of heavenly things, is much the same as to say nothing of them.

10. All our work must be managed reverently, as becomes them who are conscious of the presence of God, and use not holy things as if they were common. The more of God that appears in our duties, the more authority will they have with men: and reverence is that affection of the soul which proceeds from deep apprehensions of God, and manifests a mind that is conversant with him. To manifest irreverence in the things of God, is so far to manifest hypocrisy, and that the heart does not agree with the tongue. I know not what others may feel; but the most reverend preacher, who speaks as if he saw the face of God affects my heart more, even with common words, than an irreverend man with the most exquisite preparations. Yea, suppose he bawl it out with ever so much seeming earnestness, if reverence be not answerable to fervency, it has but little effect. Of all preaching in the world, that speaks not absolute falsehood, I hate that preaching which tends to make the hearers laugh, or to move their minds with levity, and affect them as stage plays do, instead of affecting them with a holy reverence of the name of God. Jerome, in his epistle

to Nepotian, says, "When you are teaching in the church, let not a shout be excited in the people, but a groan. The tears of your hearers will tend to your praise." We should, as it were, suppose we saw the throne of God, and millions of glorious angels attending him, that we might be awed with his majesty when we draw near to him in holy things, lest we profane them, and take his name in vain.

To this I annex, that all our work must be done spiritually, as men possessed of the Holy Ghost, and actuated by him, and men who savour the things of the Spirit. There is in some men's preaching a spiritual strain, which spiritual hearers can discern and relish: and in others this sacred tincture is so evidently wanting, that even when they speak of spiritual things, the manner is such as if they were common matters. Our evidence and ornaments also must be spiritual, rather from the Holy Scripture, with a cautious use of the fathers and other writers, than from Aristotle, or the authorities of men. The wisdom of the world must not be magnified above nor equalled with the wisdom of God. Philosophy must be taught to stoop and serve, while faith bears the sway: and great scholars in Aristotle's school must take heed of too much glorying in their master, and despising those who are below them, lest they themselves prove lower in the school of Christ, and *least* in the kingdom of God, while they would be *great* in the eyes of men. As wise a man as any of them would glory in nothing but the cross of Christ, and desired to know nothing but him crucified. They who are so confident that Aristotle is in hell, should not too much take him for their guide in the way to heaven. It is an excellent memorandum of Gregory's, "God first collected the unlearned, philosophers afterwards; and he did not teach fishermen by orators, but overcame orators by fishermen." The most learned men should think of this.

Let all writers have their due esteem, but compare none of them with the word of God. We will not

refuse their service, but we must abhor them as competitors. It is a sign of a distempered heart to lose our relish for Scripture excellence; for there is a connaturality in a spiritual heart with the word of God, because that word is the seed which regenerated it. The word is that seal that made all the holy impressions which are in the hearts of true believers, and stamped the image of God upon them; and, therefore, they must needs be like that word, and highly esteem it as long as they live. Austin tells us, "A certain Platonist said that the beginning of the holy gospel by John ought to be written in letters of gold, and fixed up in the most conspicuous places in all churches." If he could so value that which suited with his Platonism, how should we value the whole, which is suitable to the Christian nature and interest! God is the best teacher of his own nature and will.

11. The whole course of our ministry must be carried on in tender love to our people. We must let them see that nothing pleases us but what profits them; and that which does them good does us good, and that nothing distresses us more than their hurt. We must remember, as Hierom says, that bishops are not lords, but fathers, and therefore must be affected to their people as their children; yea, the tenderest love of a mother should not surpass theirs. We must even "travail in birth for them, till Christ be formed in them." They should see that we care for no outward thing; no, not money, nor liberty, nor credit, nor life, in comparison of their salvation; but could even be content, with Moses, to have our name wiped out of the book of life, i. e., to be removed *è numero vivèntium*, rather than they should perish, and not be found in the Lamb's book of life, *in numero salvandorum*. Thus should we, as John says, be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren; and with Paul, not to count our lives dear to us, so we may but finish our course with joy, in doing the work of God for their salvation. When the people see that you unfeignedly love them, they will hear any thing, and bear any thing, and

follow you the more easily. As Austin says, *Dilige et dic quicquid voles.* We take all things well ourselves from one that we know does entirely love us. We will put up with a blow that is given us in love, sooner than a harsh word that is spoken to us in anger or malice. Most men judge of the counsel as they judge of the affection of him who gives it, at least so far as to give it a fair hearing. O therefore see that *you* feel a tender love to your people in your breasts, and let *them* feel it in your speeches, and see it in your dealings. Let them see that you spend and are spent for their sakes; and that all you do is for them, and not for any ends of your own. To this end the works of charity are necessary, as far as your estate will reach; for bare words will hardly convince men that you have any great love to them. "Friendship arises from giving and receiving." But when you are not able to give, show that you are willing to give if you had it, and do that sort of good that you can. But be sure that your love prove not carnal, flowing from pride, as one that is a suiter for himself rather than for Christ, and therefore loves because *he is* loved, or, that he *may be*, pretends it. Therefore take heed that you do not connive at their sins under pretence of love, for that were to act contrary to the nature and end of love. "If you suffer the vices of your friend, you make them your own." Friendship must be cemented by piety. "First show yourself good, and then seek one like yourself." A wicked man can be no true friend; and if you befriend their wickedness, you show that you are such yourselves. Pretend not to love them, if you favour their sins, and seek not their salvation. By favouring their sin you will show your enmity to God, and then how can you love your brother? "He cannot be a friend to man who is an enemy to God." If you be their best friends, help them against their worst enemies. *Amicus anime custus.* And think not all sharpness inconsistent with love: parents correct their children; and God himself chastens every son that he loves. *Melius est*

cum severitate diligere, quam cum lenitate decipere. Besides this, the nature of love is to excite men to do good, and to do it speedily, diligently, and as extensively as they can.

12. Another necessary concomitant of our work is patience. We must bear with many abuses and injuries from those to whom we are doing good. When we have studied for them, prayed for them, and besought and exhorted them with all condescension; when we have spent ourselves for them, and given them what we are able, and dealt with them as if they had been our children, we must expect that many will requite us with hatred and contempt, and cast our kindness in our faces with disdain, and take us for their enemies, because we tell them the truth; and that the more we love the less we shall be beloved. All this must be patiently endured, and still we must unweariedly hold on in doing good; in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance. If they unthankfully scorn and reject our teaching, and bid us look to ourselves and care not for them, yet still must we hold on. We have to deal as with distracted men who will fly in the face of their physician, but we must not therefore forsake the cure. He is unworthy to be a physician who will be driven away from a frantic patient by foul words. If we tell them that natural men savour not the things of the Spirit, and are beside themselves in matters of salvation, we must measure our expectations accordingly, and not look that fools should make us as grateful a return as wise men. These are things that all of us can say; but when we come to the practical part with sinners who reproach and slander us for our love, and are more ready to spit in our faces than to give us thanks for our advice, what heart-risings will thery be, and how will the remains of the old Adam, pride and passion, struggle against the meekness and patience of the new man! And how sadly do many ministers come short in this part of their trial!

Having given you these twelve concomitants of our ministerial labour, as singly to be performed by every minister, let me conclude with one that is necessary to us as we are conjoined and fellow-labourers in the work; and it is this: We must be very studious of union and communion among ourselves, and of the unity and peace of the churches that we oversee. We cannot but be sensible how needful this is to the prosperity of the whole, the strengthening of our common cause, the good of the particular members of our flock, and the farther enlargement of the kingdom of Christ. Ministers must smart when the church is wounded, and be so far from being the leaders in divisions, that they should take it as a principal part of their work to prevent and heal them. Day and night should they bend their studies to find out means to close such breaches. They must not only hearken to motions for unity, but propound and prosecute them. Not only entertain an offered peace, but even follow it when it flies from them. They must therefore keep close to the ancient simplicity of the Christian faith, and the foundation and centre of catholic unity. They must abhor the arrogance of those who frame new engines to harass and tear in pieces the church of God, under pretence of obviating errors, and maintaining the truth. The Scripture sufficiency must be maintained, and nothing beyond it imposed on others; and if papists or others call to us for the standard and rule of our religion, it is the Bible that we must show them, rather than any confession of churches, or writings of men. We must learn to distinguish between certainties and uncertainties, necessaries and unnecessaries, catholic verities and private opinions; and to lay the stress of the church's peace upon the former, and not upon the latter. We must therefore understand the doctrine of antiquity, that we may know what way men have gone to heaven in former ages; and also know the writings of later divines, that we may partake of the benefit of their clearer methods and explications; but neither of

them must be made the rule of our faith or charity. We must avoid the common confusion of speaking for those who do not distinguish between verbal and real errors, and hate that *rabies quorundam theologorum*, who tear their brethren as heretics before they understand them. And we must learn to see the true state of controversies, and reduce them to the very point where the difference lies, and not to make them seem greater than they are. Instead of quarrelling with our brethren, we must combine against the common adversaries. Ministers must associate and hold communion, correspondence, and constant meetings, for those ends; and smaller differences of judgment must not interrupt them. They must do as much of the work of God in unity and concord as they can. It is the use of synods not to rule over one another, and make laws; but to avoid misunderstandings, consult for mutual edification, maintain love and communion, and go on unanimously in the work which God has already commanded us. Had the ministers of the gospel been men of peace, and of catholic rather than factious spirits, the church of Christ had not been in such a situation as it is now. The Lutherans and Calvinists abroad, and the differing parties here at home, would not have been plotting the subversion of one another, nor have remained at such a distance, and in such uncharitable bitterness, nor strengthened the common enemy, and hindered the building and prosperity of the church as they have done.

CHAPTER IV.

The first use for humiliation. Confession of the sins of the ministry, especially of this nation—Confession of our present sins, particularly pride—Undervaluing the unity and peace of the catholic church—Want of serious industry, and unreservedly laying out ourselves in the work of God—Discovered by negligent studies—Dull, drowsy preaching—Not helping them who want—Neglect of acknowledged duties, viz., church discipline—The pretences refuted which are brought to justify it—The power of worldly interests—these manifested by temporizing, worldly business, barrenness in works of charity—The whole applied for humiliation.

Reverend and Dear Brethren,—Our business here this day is to humble ourselves before the Lord for our former negligence, especially with regard to catechising and personally instructing those committed to our charge, and to desire God's assistance in the employment we have undertaken for the time to come. Indeed, we can scarce expect the latter without the former. If God will help us in our future duty and amendment, he will surely humble us first for our past sins. He who has not such a sense of his faults as unfeignedly to lament them, will hardly have such as will move him to reform them. The sorrow of repentance may be without a change of heart and life, because a passion is easier wrought than true conversion; but the change cannot take place without some good measure of that sorrow. Indeed, we may justly here begin our confessions. It is too common for us to expect that from our people, which we do little or nothing in ourselves. What pains do we take to humble them, while we ourselves are unhumbled! How hard do we press them with expostulations, convictions, and aggravations, to bring them to true repentance, when our own eyes are dry, and our hearts but little affected with remorse. We give them an example of hard-heartedness, while we are endeavouring by our words to mollify and melt them. O! if we did but study half as much to affect and amend our own hearts as we do our hearers, it would not be with many of us as it is! We do too little for their humili-

ation; but I fear many of us do much less for our own. Many do somewhat for other men's souls, while they seem to forget their own. They so carry the matter, as if their part of the work lay in calling to repentance, and their hearers' in repenting; theirs in speaking of tears and sorrow, and their hearers' in weeping and sorrowing; theirs in preaching duties, and their hearers' in performing them; theirs in crying down sin, and the people's in forsaking it.

But the Scriptures inform us that the guides of the church confessed their own sins as well as the sins of the people, and began in tears for their own and the people's sins. Ezra confessed the sins of the priests as well as of the people, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God. So did the Levites. Daniel confessed his own sin as well as the sins of the people. And God calls such to it as well as others.* When the fast is summoned, the people gathered, the congregation sanctified, the elders assembled, the priests, the ministers of the Lord, are called to begin the work with weeping, calling upon God for mercy. I think if we consider well the duties already opened, and also how we have performed them; the rule, and how far we have deviated from it; we need not demur upon the question, nor put it to a question, whether we have any cause for humiliation. I must needs say, though I judge myself in saying it, that he who reads but this one exhortation of Paul in Acts xx, and compares his life with it, is stupid and hard-hearted, if he do not melt under a sense of his negligence, be not laid in the dust before God, and forced to bewail his great omissions, and to flee for refuge to the blood of Christ, and to his pardoning grace. I am confident, brethren, that none of you do in judgment approve of the libertine doctrine that crieth down the necessity of confession, contrition, and true humiliation, in order to the pardon of sin. Is it not a pity then that our hearts are not more orthodox as well as our heads?

* Ezra ix, 6–10; x, 1. Neh. ix, 32–34. Dan. ix, 20. Joel ii, 15-17.

But I see our lesson is but half learned when we know it and can say it. When the understanding has learned it, there is much difficulty to teach it our wills and affections, our eyes, our tongues, and our hands. It is a sad thing that so many of us preach our hearers asleep; but it is sadder still if we have studied and preached ourselves asleep; and have talked so long against hardness of heart, till our own are grown hard under the noise of our own reproofs. Though the head only have eyes, ears, smell, and taste; the heart should have *life*, and *feeling*, and *motion*, as well as the head.

That you may see that there is cause for the sorrow which God calls us to, I consider it my duty to call to remembrance our manifold sins, or at least those that are most obvious, and set them this day in order before God and ourselves, that he may cast them behind his back; and to deal plainly and faithfully in a free confession, that He who is faithful and just may forgive them; and to judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord: wherein I suppose I have your free and hearty consent, and that you will be so far from being offended with the disgrace of your persons and of others in this office, that you will readily subscribe the charge, and be humble self-accusers; and so far am I from justifying myself by the accusation of others, that I do unfeignedly put my name with the first in the bill: for how can a wretched sinner of such great transgressions presume to justify himself with God, or how can he plead guiltless whose conscience has so much to say against him! If I cast shame upon the ministry, it is not on the office, but on our persons, by opening that sin which is our shame. The glory of our high employment does not communicate any glory to our sin; nor will it afford the smallest covering for its nakedness, for sin is a reproach to any people or persons: and it is myself, as well as others, on whom I must lay the shame. If this may not be done, what do we here to-day? Our business is to take shame to ourselves, and to give God the

glory; faithfully to open our sins, that he may cover them; and to make ourselves bare by confession, as we have done by transgression, that we may have the white raiment which covers none but the penitent; for, whether they be pastors or people, it is only he "that confesseth and forsaketh his sins that shall have mercy, when he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief," Prov. xxviii, 13.

Doubtless, if we are willing to know ourselves, we shall find that to confess which will lay us very low before the Lord. I shall, in all I have to say, keep my eye on my own heart, which I am so far from justifying in this common lamentation, that I look upon it as my necessary duty to cast the first stone at myself.

I shall not undertake to enumerate the great sins of which we are guilty, and therefore my passing over any particular is not to be considered as a denial of it. But I shall instance a few that cry loudly for humiliation and speedy reformation. Only I must first premise that, notwithstanding all the faults that are now among us, I do not believe that ever England had so able and faithful a ministry since it was a nation, as it has at this day: and I fear that few nations on earth, if any, have the like. Sure I am the change is so great within these twelve years, that it is one of the greatest joys that ever I had in the world to behold it. O how many congregations are now plainly and frequently taught that lived then in great obscurity! How many able, faithful men, are there now in a county, in comparison to what were then! How graciously has God prospered the studies of many young men who were little children in the beginning of the late troubles, so that now they eclipse most of their seniors! How many miles would I have gone twenty years ago, and less, to have heard one of those ancient revered divines, whose congregations are now grown thin, and their parts esteemed mean, by reason of the notable improvement of their juniors. And, in particular, how mercifully has the Lord dealt with this

poor country, (Worcestershire,) in raising up so many of those who do credit to their sacred office, and self-denyingly, freely, zealously, and unweariedly, lay out themselves for the good of souls! I bless the Lord who has placed me in such a neighbourhood, where I have the brotherly fellowship of so many able, humble, unanimous, peaceable, and faithful men. O that the Lord would long continue this admirable mercy to this unworthy country! I hope I shall rejoice in God while I have a being, for the common change in other parts that I have lived to see; that so many hundreds of faithful men are hard at work for the saving of souls, *frementibus licet et frendentibus inimicis;* and that more are springing up apace. I know there are some men, whose parts I reverence, who, being in point of government of another mind, will be offended at my mentioning this happy change: but I must profess, suppose I absolutely embraced episcopacy, if I know my heart, I could not for all that but rejoice. What, not rejoice at the prosperity of the church, because men differ in opinion about its order! Should I shut my eyes against the mercies of the Lord! The souls of men are not so contemptible to me, that I should envy them the bread of life, because it is broken to them by a hand that had not episcopal approbation. O that every congregation were thus supplied! But all cannot be done at once. It requires much time to get rid of a corrupted ministry; and when the ignorant and scandalous are cast out, we cannot create abilities in others, but must wait for their preparation and growth; and then, if England drive not the gospel away by their abuse, even by their wilful hatred of the light, they are likely to be the happiest nation under heaven. For, with regard to all the sects and heresies which are creeping in and daily troubling us, I doubt not but the free gospel, managed by an able, self-denying ministry, will effectually disperse and shame them all.

But you may say, this is not confessing sin, but applauding those whose sins you pretend to confess.

I answer, it is the due acknowledgment of God's grace, and thanksgiving for his admirable mercies, that I may not seem unthankful in confession, much less to obscure or vilify his grace, while I open the frailties with which in many instances it is accompanied.

1. One of our most heinous and palpable sins is *pride*. A sin this which has too much interest in the best, but is more hateful and inexcusable in us than in any; yet it is so prevalent in some of us, that it indites our discourses, it chooses our company, it forms our countenances, it puts the accents and emphasis upon our words; when we reason, it is the determiner and exciter of our cogitations; it fills some men's minds with aspiring desires and designs; it possesses them with envious and bitter thoughts against those who stand in their light, or by any means eclipse their glory, or hinder the progress of their idolized reputation. O what a constant companion, what a tyrannical commander; what a sly, subtle, and insinuating enemy is pride! It goes with men to the draper, the mercer, and the tailor; it chooses them their cloth, their trimming, and their fashion, and dresses them in the morning. Fewer ministers would follow the fashion in hair and habit, were it not for the influence of this imperious vice: and I would that were all; but, alas, how frequently does it go with us to our studies, and there sit with us, and do our work! How often does it choose our subject, and our words and ornaments! God bids us be as plain as we can, that we may inform the ignorant; and as convincing and serious as we can, in order to melt and change unchanged hearts: but pride stands by and contradicts all. It puts in toys and trifles, and under pretence of laudable ornaments, dishonours our sermons with childish conceits. It takes off the edge and life of all our teaching, under pretence of filing off the roughness and superfluity. If we have a plain and cutting passage, it throws it away as rustical or ungrateful; when God charges us to deal with men as for their lives, and beseech them with all the earnest-

ness we are able, this cursed sin controls all, and condemns the holy commands of God, calls our most necessary duty madness, and says to us, "What, will you make people think you are mad; will you make them say you rage or rave; cannot you speak soberly and moderately?" Thus does pride make many men's sermons; and what pride makes, the devil makes; and what sermons the devil will make, and to what end, we may easily conjecture. Though the matter be of God, yet if the dress, and manner, and end be from Satan, we have no great reason to expect success.

And when pride has made the sermon, it goes with them into the pulpit; it forms their tone, animates them in the delivery, takes them off from that which may be displeasing, however necessary, and sets them in pursuit of vain applause; and the sum of all this is, that it makes men, both in studying and preaching, seek themselves, and deny God, when they should seek God's glory, and deny themselves. When they should ask, "What shall I say, and how shall I say it, to please God best, and do most good?" it makes them ask, "What shall I say, and how shall I deliver it, to be thought a learned and able preacher, and to be applauded by all who hear me?" When the sermon is over, pride goes home with them, and makes them more eager to know whether they were applauded, than whether they prevailed with any for the saving of their souls. They could find in their hearts, but for shame, to ask folks how they liked them, and to draw out their commendation. If they perceive that they are highly thought of, they rejoice as having attained their end; but if they find that they are esteemed as weak or common men, they are displeased, having missed the prize.

But even this is not the worst, if worse may be. O that ever it should be spoken of godly ministers, that they are so *set* upon popular air, and of sitting highest in men's estimation, that they envy the parts and names of their brethren who are preferred before them,

as if all were taken from their praises that is given to another, and as if God had given them his gifts to be the mere ornaments and trappings of their persons, that they may walk as men of reputation in the world, and all his gifts in others were to be trodden down and vilified, if they stand in the way of their honour! What, a saint, a preacher for Christ, and yet envy that which has the image of Christ, and malign his gifts for which he should have the glory; and all because they seem to hinder our glory! Is not every true Christian a member of the body, and therefore a partaker of the blessings of the whole, and of each particular member thereof? And does not every man owe thanks to God for his brethren's gifts, not only as having himself a part in them, as the foot has the benefit of the guidance of the eye, but also because his own ends may be attained by his brethren's gifts as well as by his own? If the glory of God and the church's felicity be not his end, he is not a Christian. Will any workman malign another because he helps him to do his master's work? Yet, alas, how common is this heinous crime among men of parts and eminence in the church! They can secretly blot the reputation of those who stand cross to their own; and what they cannot for shame do in plain and open terms, lest they be proved palpable liars and slanderers, they will do it in general and malicious intimations, raising suspicions where they cannot fasten accusations. And so far are some gone in this Satanical vice, that it is their ordinary practice, and a considerable part of their business, to keep down the estimation of any that they dislike, and to defame others in the slyest and most plausible way. And some go so far, that they are unwilling that any abler than themselves should come into their pulpits, lest they be applauded above themselves. A fearful thing that any man who has the least fear of God should so envy God's gifts; and had rather that his carnal hearers were unconverted, and the drowsy not awakened, than that it should be done by another, who may be

preferred before him. Yea, so far does this cursed vice prevail, that, in great congregations, where they have need of the help of many teachers, we can scarcely get two in equality to live together in love and quietness, and unanimously to carry on the work of God. Unless one of them be quite below the other in parts, and content to be so esteemed; or unless one be a curate to the other, or ruled by him, they are contending for precedence, envying each other's interest, and walking with strangeness and jealousy towards one another, to the shame of their profession, and greatly to the injury of the congregation. Nay, some men are so far gone in pride that, when they might have an equal assistant to farther the work of God, they prefer taking all the burden upon themselves, though more than they can bear, to letting any share with them in the honour, lest they should diminish their interest in the people.

Hence it also comes to pass, that men so magnify their own opinions, and are as censorious of any who differ from them in lesser things, as if it were all one to differ from them and from God; and expect that all should be conformed to their judgment, as if they were the rules of the church's faith. Thus, while we cry down papal infallibility and determination of controversies, we would, too many of us, be popes ourselves, and have all stand to our determination, as if we were infallible. It is true, we have more modesty than expressly to say so. We pretend that it is only the evidence of truth that we expect men should yield to, and our zeal is for the truth, and not for ourselves; but as that must needs be taken for truth which is ours, so our reasons must needs be considered valid; and if they be freely examined and found to be fallacious, as we are exceeding backward to see it ourselves, because they are ours, so we are angry that it should be disclosed to others. We espouse the cause of our errors, as if all that were spoken against them were spoken against our persons, and we were heinously injured to have our arguments fully con-

futed, by which we injured the truth and the minds of men. So that the matter is come to this through our pride, that if an error or fallacious argument fall under the patronage of a reverend name, which is not uncommon, we must either give it the victory, and give away the truth, or else become injurious to that name that patronizes it; for though you meddle not with their persons, yet they put themselves under all the strokes which you give their arguments, and feel it as sensibly as if you had spoken it of themselves, because they think it will follow in the eyes of men, that weak arguing is a sign of a weak man. If, therefore, you take it for your duty to shame their errors and false reasonings, by discovering their nakedness, they take it as if you shamed their persons; and so their names must be a garrison or fortress to their mistakes, and their reverence must defend all their sayings from the light.

And so high are our spirits that, when it becomes a duty to any to reprove or contradict us, we are commonly impatient both of the matter and of the manner. We love the man that will say as we say, be of our opinion, and promote our reputation, though less worthy of our love in other respects; but he is disagreeable to us who contradicts us, differs from us, and deals plainly with us in our miscarriages, telling us of our faults: especially in the management of our public arguments, where the eye of the world is upon us, we can scarcely endure any contradiction or plain dealing. I know that railing language is to be abhorred, and that we should be as tender of each other's reputation as our fidelity to the truth will permit: but our pride makes too many of us think all men contemn us who do not admire us; yea, and admire all that we say, and submit their judgments to our most palpable mistakes. We are so tender that no man can touch us but we are hurt; and so stout and high minded, that we can scarcely be spoken to.

I confess I have often wondered that this most heinous sin should be made so light of, and thought con-

sistent with a holy frame of heart and life, when far less sins are, by ourselves, proclaimed to be damning in our people; and I have wondered still more to see the difference between ungodly sinners and godly preachers in this respect. When we speak to drunkards, worldlings, or any ignorant and unconverted men, we declare their condition to be most deplorable and dangerous, and, as plainly as we can speak, tell them of their sin, shame, and misery; and we expect, not only that they should bear all patiently, but take all thankfully; and we have good reason for all this; yea, most that I deal with do take it patiently; and many gross sinners will commend the closest preachers most, and say that they care not for hearing a man who will not tell them plainly of their sins. But if we speak to godly ministers against their errors, or any sin, suppose we honour and reverence them, and speak as smoothly as we can; yea, suppose we mix commendation with our contradiction or reproof, yet if the applause be not predominant, so as to drown all the force of the reproof or confutation, they take it as an injury almost insufferable. That is considered as railing against them which would be no better than flattery in them to the common people, though the cause may be as great.

Brethren, I know this is a sad and harsh confession; but that all this should be among us, ought to be more grievous to us than to be told of it. Could this nakedness be hid, I should not have disclosed it, at least not so openly in the view of all. But alas, it is long ago open to the eyes of the world! We have dishonoured ourselves by idolizing our honour. We print our shame, preach our shame, and tell it to all. Some will think that I speak over charitably to call such persons godly men, in whom so great a sin prevails. I know where it is indeed predominant, and not hated, bewailed, and mortified, there can be no true godliness; and I leave every man to a cautious jealousy and search of his own heart. But if all be graceless who are guilty of any, or many, or most of

the forementioned discoveries of pride, the Lord be merciful to the ministers of this land, and give us quickly another spirit; for grace is a rarer thing than most of us have supposed it to be.

Yet I must needs say that it is not all I intend. To the praise of grace be it spoken, we have some among us here, (and I doubt not but it is so in other parts,) who are eminent for humility and condescension, and exemplary therein to their flocks and to their brethren; and it is and shall be their glory, and makes them truly honourable and amiable in the eyes of God and all good men, yea, and in the eyes of the ungodly themselves. O that the rest of us were but such!

O that the Lord would lay us at his feet in tears of unfeigned sorrow for this sin! Brethren, may I take the liberty for a little to expostulate this case with my own heart and you, that we may see the shame of our sin and be reformed? Is not pride the sin of devils, the first-born of hell? Is it not that wherein Satan's image consists; and is it a tolerable evil in men who are so engaged against him and his kingdom as we are? The very design of the gospel is self-abasing; and the work of grace is begun and carried on in humiliation. Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creature. It is a contradiction to be a sanctified man, or a true Christian, and not humble. All that will be Christians must be Christ's disciples, and come to him to learn; and their lesson is, to be meek and lowly. O how many precepts and admirable examples has our Lord and Master given us for this end! Can we once conceive of him as purposely washing and wiping his servant's feet, and still continue stout and lordly? Did he converse with the meanest, and shall we avoid them as contemptible people, and think none but persons of riches and honour to be fit for our society? How many of us are oftener found in the houses of gentlemen, than in the poor cottages of those who have most need of our help! There are many of us who would think it base to be daily with the most

needy and beggarly people, to instruct them in the matters of life, and to supply their wants, as if we had taken charge only of the souls of the rich. Alas, what is it that we have to be proud of! Of our bodies? Are they not made of the like materials as the brutes, and must they not shortly be as loathsome and abominable as the dung? Is it of our graces? The more we are proud of them, the less we have to be proud of; and when so much of the nature of grace consists in humility, it is a great absurdity to be proud of it. Is it of our learning, knowledge, abilities, and gifts? Surely, if we have any knowledge at all, we must needs know much reason to be humble; and if we know more than others, we must know more reason than others to be humble. How little is it that the most learned know, in comparison of what they are ignorant of! And to know that many things are beyond your reach, and that you cannot know them, one would think should be no great cause of pride. However, do not the devils know more than you; and will you be proud of that in which the devils excel you? Our very business is to teach the great lesson of self-denial and humility to our people, and how unfit is it then that we should be proud ourselves! We must study humility, and preach humility; and must we not also possess and practise it? A proud teacher of humility is at least a self-condemning man.

It is truly deplorable that so vile a sin is so little discerned by us. But many who are very proud can blame it in others, and take no notice of it in themselves. Even the world observes some among us, that they have aspiring minds, and seek for the highest rooms, and must be rulers, and bear the sway wherever they come, or else there is no standing before them.

Brethren, I desire to deal closely with my own heart and yours. I beseech you consider whether our speaking well of the grace that we are destitute of, and against the sin that we live in, will save us. Have not many of us cause to inquire once and again,

whether sincerity can consist with such a measure of pride? When we are telling the drunkard that he cannot be saved without becoming temperate, and the fornicator unless he become chaste; have we not as great reason, if we be proud, to say of ourselves, that we cannot be saved unless we become humble? Certainly pride is a greater sin than whoredom or drunkenness; and humility is as necessary as chastity and sobriety. Truly, brethren, a man may as certainly, and more slyly and dangerously, make haste to hell in a way of profession and earnest preaching of the gospel, and seeming zeal for a holy life, as in a way of drunkenness and filthiness. For what is true holiness but devotedness to God, and living to him; and what is wickedness, and being in a state fit for damnation, but a devotedness to ourselves, and living to ourselves; and does any man live more to himself or less to God than the proud; and may not pride make a preacher study for himself, and pray, and preach, and live for himself, even when he seems to outgo others in the work, if he outgo them that he may have the glory of it from men? It is not the work, without the principle and end, that will prove us upright. The work may be God's, and yet we do it not for God, but for ourselves. I confess I feel such continual danger, lest I should study for myself, preach for myself, and write for myself, rather than for Christ, that if I did not watch against it I should soon miscarry.

Consider, I beseech you, brethren, what habits there are in the work of the ministry, to entice a man to be selfish, that is, to be carnal and impious, even in the highest works of piety! The fame of a godly man is as great a snare as the fame of a learned man; and wo to him who takes up with the fame of godliness *instead* of godliness! Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. When the times were for learning and empty formalities, then the temptation of the proud lay that way: but now, through the unspeakable mercy of God, the most lively practical preaching

is in credit, and godliness itself is in credit; and now the temptation to proud men is here, even to pretend to be zealous preachers and godly men. O what a fine thing it seems to have the people crowd to hear us, and to be affected with what we say, and that we can command their judgment and affections! What a taking thing it is to be cried up as the most able and godly man in the country, and to be famed through the land for the highest spiritual excellence. Alas, brethren, little grace will serve to make you join yourselves with the forwardest of those men who have such inducements as these. To have the people plead for you as their felicity, call you the pillars of the church of God, and their fathers, the chariots and horsemen of Israel, and no lower language than excellent men, and able divines, and to have them depend upon you, and be ruled by you; though this may be no more than their duty, yet I must again tell you that little grace will serve to make you seem zealous men for this; nay, pride may do it, without any special grace. O therefore be jealous of yourselves, and in all your studies be sure to study humility. "He that exalteth himself shall be brought low, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." I observe commonly that almost all men, good and bad, loathe the proud, and love the humble. So far does pride contradict itself, unless where it purposely hides itself; and, conscious of its own deformity, borrows the homely dress of humility: and we have cause to be the more jealous, because it is the most radicated vice, and as hardly as any extirpated from the soul. When it was a disgrace for a man to be a godly, zealous preacher, then pride had not such a bait as now.

2. Another sin the ministers of England, and many other churches, are guilty of, is *undervaluing the unity and peace of the whole church.* Though I scarcely ever met with any that will not speak for unity and peace, or at least that will expressly speak against it; yet it is not common to meet with those who are serious and active in promoting it: but too commonly

do we find men averse to it, and jealous of it, if not themselves the instruments of division. The papists have so long abused the name of the catholic church, that, in opposition to them, many either put it out of their creed, or only fill up room with the name, while they understand not, or consider not, the nature of the thing; or else think it enough to believe that there is such a body, though they behave not themselves as members of it. If the papists will idolize the church, shall we therefore deny, disregard, or divide it? It is a great and common sin through the Christian world, to take up religion in a way of faction; and, instead of love and tender concern for the universal church, to confine that love and respect to a party. Not but that we must prefer in our estimation and communion the purer parts, and refuse to participate with any in their sins; but the most infirm and diseased part should be compassionated and assisted to the utmost of our power, and communion held as far as is lawful, and nowhere avoided but upon the urgency of necessity. As we must love those in our neighbourhood who have the plague or leprosy, and afford them all the relief we can, though we may not have local communion with them; so in other diseases which are not so infectious, we may be the more with them for their help, by how much the more they need it. Among the multitudes who say they are of the catholic church, it is rare to meet with any of a catholic spirit. Men do not consider and respect the whole church, but look upon their own party as if it were the whole. If there be some called Lutherans, some Calvinists, and some among these of subordinate divisions, most of them will pray hard for the prosperity of their party, and rejoice and give thanks accordingly, when it goes well with them; but if any other party suffer, they little regard it, as if it were no loss at all to the church. They behave as if they were the whole church, and as if it went well with the church when it goes well with them. We cry down the pope as antichrist, for including the church in the Romish pale, and no

doubt but it is an abominable schism: but alas, how many of us imitate him while we reprove him! The papists foist the word Roman into their creed, and turn the catholic church into the Roman Catholic Church; as if there were no other catholics, and the church were of no larger extent. So it is with many others. Some will have it to be the Lutheran Catholic Church, some the Reformed Catholic Church, some the Baptist Catholic Church, and so with others: and if they differ not among themselves, they are not much troubled at differing from others, though it be from almost all the Christian world. The peace of their party they take for the peace of the church.

How rare it is to meet with a man who smarts and bleeds with the church's wounds, and sensibly lays them to heart as his own; or who ever was solicitous about a cure! No, but almost every party think that the happiness of the rest consists only in turning to them; and because they are not of their mind, they cry, "Down with them;" and are glad to hear of their fall, as thinking that is the way for the church to rise. How few are there who understand the true state of controversies between the several parties; or who ever clearly discerned how many of them are but verbal, and how many are real! And if those who understand the matter, in order to right information and accommodation, disclose it to others, it is taken as an extenuation of their error, and a carnal compliance with them in their sin. Few men grow zealous for peace till they are old, have much experience of men's spirits and principles, and see the true state of the church better, and the several differences, than they did before. Then they begin to write their *irenecons*, &c., as our Davenant, Morton, Hall, whose excellent treatise, called, *The Peace-Maker*, and his *Pax-terris*, deserve to be transcribed upon all our hearts. Nay, it frequently brings a man under suspicion either of favouring some heresy, or abating his zeal, if he attempt a pacific work; as if there were no zeal necessary for the great fundamental verities of the church's

unity and peace, but only for parties, and some particular truths.

A great advantage the devil has gained this way, by employing his own agents, the unhappy Socinians, in writing so many treatises for catholic and arch-catholic unity and peace, which they did for their own ends; by which means the enemy of peace has brought it to pass, that whoever makes a motion for peace, is immediately brought under suspicion of being one who has need of it for an indulgence to his own errors. A fearful case this, that heresy should be credited, as if none were such friends to unity and peace as they who propagate it; and that so great and necessary a duty, upon which the church's welfare depends, should be brought into such suspicion or disgrace.

Brethren, I speak not all this without good reason. We have as sad divisions among us in England, considering the piety of the persons, and the smallness of the matter of our discord, as most nations under heaven have known. The most that keeps us at odds is the right form and order of church-government. Is the distance so great that Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Independent might not be well agreed? Were they but heartily willing and forward for peace, they might—I know they might. I have spoken with some moderate men of all the parties, and I perceive by their concessions it might easily be done. Were men's hearts but sensibly affected with the situation of the church, and unfeignedly touched with love to one another, and did they but heartily set themselves to seek it, the settling of a safe and happy peace would be an easy work. If we could not in every point agree, we might easily find out, and narrow our differences, and hold communion upon our agreement in the main; determining of the safest way for the managing of our few small differences, without danger or trouble to the church. But is this much done? It is not. To the shame of all our faces be it spoken. Let each party flatter themselves now as

they please, it will be recorded to the shame of the ministry of England, while the gospel shall abide in the Christian world. What will be recorded? What! Why this: That learned and godly ministers in England did first disagree among themselves, and head and lead on their people in those disagreements; that they proceeded in them for the space of fourteen years, and in all that time had as great advantages and opportunities for agreement as any people in the world —they had the sad experience of the conflagration of the commonwealth, and were scourged to it by a calamitous war. They saw the fearful confusions in the church; and the perverting of multitudes, as Socinians, Ranters, and Infidels; they saw the continual jealousies and bitterness that their distance bred, and how it was the fuel of a daily course of sin: and yet for all these they used no effectual endeavours for a cure. They could let a course of sin run; they could let divisions and heresies increase, and see the church of Christ bleed, and yet forbear the cheapest cure that ever a people could be called to use. They could see, and hear, and know, that we were all made a very derision to our enemies, and the public scorn or pity of the world, and yet sit still, as if all this were little to them. They had magistrates who did not hinder them from the work; but gave them full liberty to consult and endeavour a complete agreement. They lived near each other, and might easily have met together for the work: and if one, or two, or a hundred meetings could not have accomplished it, they might have held on till it was done. And yet for all this there is nothing done, nor any considerable attempt yet made towards it. O what heinous aggravations accompany this sin! Never since the apostles' days, I think, did men make greater profession of godliness. The most of them are bound by solemn oaths and covenants to promote unity and reformation. They all confess the worth of peace; and most of them will preach and talk of it, while they sit still and neglect it, as if it were not worth looking after. They will read

and preach on those texts that command men to follow peace with all men, and as much as in us lies, if it be possible, to live peaceably with them; and yet they are so far from following it, and doing all they possibly can for it, that too many will snarl at it, and malign and censure any who endeavour it, as if all zeal for peace proceeded from an abatement of zeal for holiness; and as if holiness and peace were so fallen out, that there were no reconciling them, notwithstanding they have found by long experience, that concord is a sure friend to piety, and piety always moves to concord. We have seen how errors and heresies are bred by discord, as discord is bred and fed by them. We have seen, to our sorrow, that where the servants of God should live together as one, of one heart, one soul, and one lip, and should promote each other's faith and holiness, and admonish and assist each other against sin, and rejoice together in the hope of their future glory, we have contrarily lived in mutual jealousies, drowned holy love in bitter contention, and have studied to disgrace and undermine each other, and to increase our own parties by right or wrong; and we who are wont to boast of our love to the brethren as the certain mark of our sincerity in the faith, have now turned it into the love of a party only: and those who are against that party have more of our spleen, envy, and malice, than our love.

I know this is not so with all; but yet it is so common, that it may cause us to question the sincerity of many who are thought by themselves and others to be most sincere. And it is not ourselves only that are scorched in this flame; but we have drawn our people into it, and cherished them in it; so that most of the godly in the nation are fallen into several parties, and have turned much of their ancient piety into vain opinions, vain disputes, envyings, and animosities; yea, whereas it was wont to be made the certain mark of a graceless wretch to deride the godly, how few there are now who stick at secretly deriding and slan-

dering those who are not of their opinion? A pious Episcopalian can reverently scorn and slander a Presbyterian; and some of them an Independent, and an Independent both: and, which is worst of all, the common ignorant people take notice of all this, and do not only deride us, but are hardened by us against religion; and when we go about to persuade them to be religious, they see so many parties that they know not which to join, and think it as good to be of none at all, as of any, when they are uncertain which is right; and thus thousands contemn all religion in consequence of our divisions; and poor carnal wretches begin to think themselves in the better case of the two, because they hold to their old way, when we hold to nothing. Yea, and these pious contenders do more effectually plead the devil's cause against one another than any of the ignorant people can do. They can prove one another deceivers and blasphemers, and what not; and they do this by secret slanders among all that they can handsomely vent them to, and perhaps also by public disputations and printed books. So that when the obstinate drunkards are at a loss, and have nothing to say of their own against a man that would drive them from their sin, prompted by the railing books or reports of factious malice, they say, "I regard him not, or his doctrine; such a man has proved him a deceiver and a blasphemer; let him answer him if he can." And thus the lies and slanders of some, and the bitter opprobrious speeches of others, have more effectually done the devil's service, under the name of orthodoxy and zeal for truth, than the malignant scorners of godliness could have done it. So that the matter is come to that pass, that there are few men of note of any party, on whom the reproaches of the other parties are not so public, that the ignorant and wicked rabble who should be converted by them, have learned to be orthodox, and to vilify and scorn them. Mistake me not. I do not slight orthodoxy, nor jeer at the name; but disclose the pretences of devilish zeal in pious, or seemingly pious men. If

you be offended with me for my harsh language, because I can tell you that I learned it of God, I dare be bold therefore to tell you farther, that you have far more cause to be offended at your own practices. The thing itself is surely odious, if the name be so odious that you cannot bear it. How should the presence and guilt of it terrify you, if the name make you start! I know that many of these reverend calumniators think they show that soundness in the faith, and love to truth, which others want. But I will resolve the case in the words of the Holy Ghost: "Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying (or jealousies) and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth; this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish: for where envying (or bitter zeal) and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy; and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace," James iii. I pray you read these words again and again, and study them.

3. The next sin which I shall mention, that we are lamentably guilty of, is this: We do not seriously, unreservedly, and industriously, lay out ourselves in the work of the Lord, as becomes men of our profession and engagements. I bless the Lord that there are so many who do this work with all their might! But, alas, for the most part, even of those whom we consider as godly ministers, how reservedly and how negligently do they go through their work! How few of us behave ourselves in our office as men that are wholly devoted thereto, and have devoted all they have to the same end! That you may see the grounds of this confession, I shall mention to you some of the sinful discoveries of it, which too much abound.

(1.) It is too common with us to be negligent in our

studies. Few men will take that pains which is necessary for rightly informing their understanding, and fitting them for their farther work. Some men have no delight in their studies, but take only now and then an hour, as an unwelcome task which they are forced to undergo, and are glad when they are from under the yoke. Will neither the natural desire of knowing, nor the spiritual desire of knowing God and divine things, nor the consciousness of our great ignorance and weakness, nor a sense of the weight of our ministerial work; will none of these keep us closer to our studies, and make us more diligent in seeking after the truth? This diligence is now the more necessary for ministers, because the necessity of the church draws many from the universities so young, that they are obliged to teach and learn at the same time. And, for my part, I would not discourage such young ones, provided they be but competently qualified, and quickened with an earnest desire for men's salvation, and are drawn out by the present necessities sooner than they would go, if the church could longer wait for their preparation, and will but study hard in the country. For I know that as theology is practical science, so the knowledge of it thrives best in a practical course. Laying out here is a means of gathering in; and a hearty endeavour to communicate and do good is not the smallest help to our own proficiency. Many men have not been ashamed to confess how young and raw they were at their entrance, who yet have grown to eminent parts. Vigilius, the martyr, was made bishop of Trent at twenty years old. Ambrose says, "Men should learn before they begin to teach: and whatever proficiency any one may have made, there is none but will require to be taught as long as he lives."

O what abundance of things there are that a minister should understand; and what a great defect it is to be ignorant of them; and how much shall we miss such knowledge in our work! Many ministers study only to compose their sermons, and very little more,

when there are so many books to be read, and so many matters that we should not be unacquainted with. Nay, in the study of our sermons we are too negligent, gathering only a few naked heads, and not considering of the most forcible expressions by which we should set them home to men's hearts. We must study how to convince and get within men, and how to bring each truth to the quick, and not leave all this to our extemporary promptitude, unless it be in cases of necessity. Certainly, brethren, experience will teach you that men are not made learned or wise without hard study, and unwearied labours and experience.

(2.) If ministers were set upon the work of the Lord, it would be done more vigorously than it is. How few ministers preach with all their might; or speak about everlasting joy or torment in such a manner as may make men believe that they are in good earnest! It is enough to make a man's heart ache to see a company of dead and drowsy sinners sit under a minister, and not have a word that is likely to quicken or awaken them. To think with ourselves, "If these sinners were but convinced and awakened, they might be converted and live." And, alas, we speak in such a smooth and careless manner, that sleepy sinners cannot hear: the blow falls so light, that hard-hearted persons cannot feel it! Most ministers will not so much as put out their voice, and stir themselves up to an earnest utterance. But if they do speak loud and earnestly, how few answer it with earnestness of matter; and then the voice does but little good: the people will take it but as mere bawling, when the matter does not correspond. It would grieve one to hear what excellent doctrines some ministers have in hand, and let them die in their hands for want of close and lively application. What fit matter they have for convincing sinners, and how little they make of it; and what a deal of good it might do if it were set home, and yet they cannot or will not do it! O, sirs, how plainly, how closely, and how earnestly should we

deliver a message of such vast importance as ours; *in* which the everlasting life or death of men is concerned! Methinks we are nowhere so wanting as in this seriousness. There is nothing more unsuitable to such a business than superficiality and dulness. What, speak coldly for God, and for men's salvation! Can we believe that our people must be converted or condemned, and yet speak in a drowsy tone?

In the name of God, brethren, labour to awaken your hearts before you come, and when you are in the work, that you may be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners! Remember that they must be awakened or damned; and a sleepy preacher will hardly awaken them. If you give the holy things of God the highest praises in words, and yet do it coldly, you will in the manner unsay what you said in the matter. It is a kind of contempt in great things, especially things *so* great, to speak of them without great affection and fervency: the manner as well as the words must set them forth. If we are commanded whatever our hand finds to do, to do it with all our might; then certainly such a work as preaching for men's salvation should be done with all our might. But, alas, how few, how thin are such men: here one, and there one, even among good ministers, that have an earnest, persuading, working way; so that the people can feel him preach when they hear him.

(3.) If we be all heartily devoted to the work of God, why do we not compassionate the poor unprovided congregations about us, and take care to help them to able ministers; and in the mean time step out now and then to their assistance, when the business of our own particular charge will give us leave. A lecture in the more ignorant places, purposely for the work of conversion, performed by the most lively working preachers, might be a great help where constant means are wanting.

(4.) The negligent execution of acknowledged duties shows that we are not so devoted to the work as we should be. If there be any work of reformation to be

set on foot, how many there are who will go no farther than they are drawn; and it were well if all would do so much.

If any business for the church be on foot, how many neglect it for their own private business: when we should meet and consult together for the unanimous and successful performance of our work, one has this business of his own, and another that, which must be preferred before God's business.

And when a work is likely to prove difficult and costly, how backward are we to it, make excuses, and will not come forward! For instance: What has been more talked of, and prayed for, and contended about in England for many years past, than the business of discipline? And there are but few men who are not zealous in disputing for one side or other: some for the Episcopal way, some for the Presbyterian, and some for the Congregational. And yet, when we come to the practice of it, for aught I see, we are most of us for no way. It has made me wonder sometimes to look on the face of England, and see how few congregations in the land have any considerable execution of discipline; and to think withal what volumes they have written for it, and how almost all the ministers in the nation are engaged for it--how zealously they have contended for it, and made many a just exclamation against the opposers of it; and yet for all this do little or nothing in the exercise of it. I have marvelled what should make them so zealous in siding for that which their practice shows that their hearts are against: but I see a disputing zeal is more natural than a holy, obedient, and practising zeal. How many ministers there are in England who know not their own charge, who plead for the truth of their particular churches, and know not which they are, or who are the members of them; and who never cast out one obstinate sinner; no, nor have brought one to public confession of repentance, and promise of reformation; nor yet admonished one publicly, to call him to such repentance. But they think they do their

duty if they do not give them the sacrament of the Lord's supper, when, perhaps, they themselves avoid it voluntarily, as well as thousands more who keep away without our prohibiting them; and in the mean time we leave them stated members of our churches, grant them all other communion with the church, and do not callthem to personal repentance for their sin. Brethren, I desire not to offend any party, nor to bring the least dishonour on them; but I must say that these sins are not to be covered over with excuses, extenuations, or denials. We have long cried up discipline. Would you have people value your mode of government or not? No doubt but you would: and if you would have them value it, it must be for some excellence. Show them then that excellence, what it is, and wherein it consists; and if you would have them believe you, show it them not only on paper, but in practice; not only in words, but in deeds. How can the people know the worth of bare notions and names of discipline, without the thing? Is it a name and a shadow that you have made all this noise about? How can they think that that is good which does no good? Truly, I fear, we take not the way to maintain our cause, but to betray it, while we are only hot disputers for it.

(5.) Another sad discovery, that we have not so devoted ourselves and all we have to the service of God as we ought, is, *the prevalence of worldly and selfish interests against the interest and work of Christ.* And this I shall farther manifest in these three instances following:—Our temporizing—our too much minding worldly things and shrinking from duties that clash with our interest in that respect—our barrenness in works of charity, and in the improvement of all that we have to our Master's use.

[1.] I would not have any to be contentious with those who govern them, nor to be disobedient to any of their lawful commands. But it is not the least reproach upon the ministry, that the most of them, for worldly advantage, still suit themselves with the party

that is most likely to suit their ends. If they look for secular advantages, they suit themselves to the secular power; if for the air of ecclesiastic applause, then they suit themselves to the party of ecclesiastics that is most in credit. This is not a private, but an epidemical malady. In Constantine's days how prevalent were the orthodox! In Constantius's days they almost all turned Arians; so that there were very few bishops who did not apostatize or betray the truth, even of the men who had been in the Council of Nice. And when not only Liberius, but the great Osius himself, fell, who had been the president, or chief, in so many orthodox councils, what better could be expected from weaker men! Were it not for secular advantage, or ecclesiastical faction and applause, how could it come to pass that ministers of all the countries in the world are either all, or almost all, of that religion and way which is most in credit, and most consistent with their worldly interest? Among the Greeks, they are all of the Greek profession; and among the Abassines, the Nestorians, the Maronites, the Jacobites, the ministers generally go one way; and among the papists, they are almost all papists. In Saxony, Sweden, Denmark, &c., they are almost all Lutherans; and in Holland, France, and Scotland they are almost all Calvinists.

It is strange that they should be all in the right in one country, and all in the wrong in another, if carnal advantages and reputation did not sway much. When men fall upon a conscientious search, the variety of intellectual capacities unavoidably causes a great variety of conceits about some hard and comparatively unimportant things: but let the prince and the stream of men in credit go one way, and you shall have the generality of ministers agree to a hair, and that without any extraordinary search. How generally and often did the common sort of ministers change their religion with the prince in this land! Not all, as our martyrology can witness, but the most. I purposely forbear to mention any later change. If the

rulers of a university, who have the disposal of preferments, should be corrupt, how much might they do with most of the students, where mere arguments would not take! And the same tractable distemper so often follows them into the ministry, that it occasions the enemies to say that reputation and preferment are our religion and our reward.

[2.] How common is it for ministers to drown themselves in worldly business! Too many are such as the sectaries would have them be, who tell us that we should go to plough and cart, and labour for our living, and preach without so much study: and this is a lesson easily learned. Men take no pains to cast off and prevent worldly care, that their souls and the church may have their care. How commonly are those duties neglected that are likely, if performed, to diminish our estates! For example: Are there not many who dare not, and will not, set up the exercise of any discipline in their churches; not only on the forementioned accounts, but especially because it may hinder the people from paying them their dues! They will not offend sinners with discipline, lest they offend them in their estates. I find money is too strong an argument for some men to answer, who can proclaim the love of it to be the root of all evil, and can make large orations on the danger of covetousness. I will now say no more to these but this: If it were so deadly a sin in Simon Magus to offer to buy the gift of God with money, what is it to sell his gifts, his cause, and the souls of men, for money; and what reason have such to fear lest their money perish with them!

[3.] But the most that I have to say is to the third discovery. If worldly and selfish interests did not prevail against the interest of Christ and the church, surely most ministers would be more fruitful in good works, and more ready to lay out what they have for their Master's use. Experience has fully proved that works of charity most potently remove prejudice, and open the ears to words of piety. If men see that you are accustomed to do good, they will the more

easily believe that you are good, and therefore that that is good to which you persuade them. When they see that you love them and seek their good, they will the more readily trust you ; and when they see that you seek not the things of the world, they will the less suspect your intention, and the more easily be drawn by you to seek that which you seek. O how much good might ministers do, if they set themselves wholly to do good, and would dedicate all their faculties and substance to that end ! Say not that it is a small matter to do good to men's bodies, and that this will but win them to us, and not to God, nor convert the soul ; for prejudice is a great hinderance to men's conversion, and this will remove it. We might do men more good, if they were but willing to learn of us ; and this will make them willing, and then our farther diligence may profit them.

Brethren, I pray you do not think that it is ordinary charity that is expected from you, any more than ordinary piety. You must, in proportion to your talents, go much beyond others. It is not to give now and then twopence to a poor man : others do that as well as you. But what singular thing do you with your estates for your Master's use ? I know you cannot give away that which you have not: but I think all that you have should be for God. I know the great objection is, " We have wife and children to provide for : a little will not serve them at present, and we are not bound to leave them beggars." To which I answer, first, There are few texts of Scripture more abused than that of the apostle : " He that provideth not for his own, and especially those of his family, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." This is made a pretence for gathering up portions, and providing a full estate for posterity, when the apostle speaks only against those who cast their poor kindred and family on the church, to be maintained out of the common stock, though they were able to do it themselves. As if one who has a widow in his house, who is his mother or daughter, and would have her be

kept on the parish when he has enough himself. His following words show that it is present provision, and not future portions, that the apostle speaks of, when he bids "them that have widows administer to them," or give them what is sufficient. Secondly: You may so educate your children, as other persons do, that they may be able to get their own livings, in some honest trade or employment, without great provision laid up for them. I know that your charity and care must begin at home, but it must not end there. You are bound to do the best you can to educate your children so that they may be most serviceable to God; but not to leave them rich, nor to forbear other necessary works of charity merely for a larger provision for them. There must be some proportion kept between our provision for our families and for the church and poor. A truly charitable, self-denying man, who has devoted himself and all that he has to God, would be the best judge of the due proportions, and would see which way of expense is likely to do God the greatest service, and that way he would take. Thirdly: I confess I would not have men lie under endangering strong temptations to incontinence, lest they wound themselves and their profession by their falls: but yet methinks it is hard that men can do no more to mortify the concupiscence of the flesh, that they may live single, and have none of these temptations from wife and children, to hinder them from furthering their ministerial ends by charitable works. If he who marries not does better than he who does, surely ministers should labour to do that which is best; and if he who can receive this saying must receive it, we should endeavour after it. Fourthly: But they who must marry should take such as can maintain themselves and their children, or maintain them at such a rate as their temporal means will afford, and devote as much of the church's means to the church's service as they can.

I would put no man upon extremes: but in this case flesh and blood make even good men so partial

that they take their duties, and duties of very great worth and weight, to be extremes. If worldly vanities did not blind us, we might see when a public, or other greater good, calls us to deny ourselves and our families. Why should we not live more sparingly and poor in the world, rather than leave those works undone which may be of greater use than our plentiful provision? But, in matters of duty, we consult with flesh and blood; and we may easily know what counsel it will give us. It tells us we must have a competency; and many pious men's competency is but little below the rich man's rates. If they be not clothed with the best, and fare not deliciously every day, they have not a competency. A man who preaches an immortal crown of glory, must not seek much after transitory vanity; and he who preaches the contempt of riches, must himself contemn them, and show it by his life; and he who preaches self-denial and mortification, must practise these in the eyes of those to whom he preaches, if he would have his doctrine prosper. All Christians are sanctified, and therefore themselves and all that they have are consecrated and dedicated to their Master's use; but ministers are doubly sanctified—they are devoted to God both as Christians and as ministers, and therefore they are doubly obliged to honour him with what they have.

O, brethren, what abundance of good works are before us, and how few of them do we put our hands to! I know the world expects more from us than we have: but if we cannot answer the expectations of the unreasonable, let us do what we can to answer the expectations of God, conscience, and all just men. It is the will of God that with well doing we should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Especially those ministers who have large incomes must do good in proportion.

I will give but one instance at this time, which I mentioned before. There are some ministers who have 150, or 200, or £300 per annum, of church

means; and have so great parishes that they are not able to do a quarter of the ministerial work, nor once in a year to deal personally with half their people for their instruction; and yet they will content themselves with public preaching, as if that were all that were necessary, and leave almost all the rest undone, to the everlasting danger or damnation of multitudes, rather than maintain one or two diligent men to assist them Or, if they have an assistant, it is but some young man to ease them about baptizings or burials, or such work, and not one that will faithfully and diligently watch over the flock, and afford them that personal instruction which is so necessary. If this be not serving ourselves of God, and not serving God and selling men's souls for our fuller maintenance in the world, what is? Methinks such men should fear, lest, while they are accounted excellent preachers and godly ministers by men, they should be accounted cruel soul-murderers by Christ; and lest the cries of those souls whom they have betrayed to damnation should ring in their ears for ever. Will preaching a good sermon serve the turn, while you never look more after them, but deny them that closer help that you find to be necessary; and alienate that maintenance to your own flesh which should provide relief for so many souls? How can you open your mouths against oppressors, when you yourselves are such great oppressors, not only of men's bodies, but their souls? How can you preach against unmercifulness, while you are so unmerciful? And how can you talk against unfaithful ministers, while you are so unfaithful yourselves? The sin is not therefore small because it is unobserved, and not become odious in the eyes of men; nor because the charity which you withhold is such as the people blame you not for withholding. Satan himself, their greatest enemy, has their consent all along in the work of their perdition. It is no extenuation therefore of your sin that you have their consent; for that you may sooner have for their hurt than for their good.

I shall proceed no farther in these confessions and discoveries, but beseech you to take what is said into consideration; and see whether this be not the great and lamentable sin of the ministers of the gospel, that *they are not fully devoted to God*, and give not up themselves and all that they have to the carrying on of the blessed work which they have undertaken: and whether flesh-pleasing and self-seeking interests, distinct from that of Christ, do not make us neglect much of our duty, and walk unfaithfully in so great a trust, and reservedly serve God in the cheapest and most applauded part of his work, and withdraw from that which would put us upon cost and sufferings: and whether this do not show that too many are earthly who seem to be heavenly, mind the things below while they preach for the things above, and idolize the world while they call men to contemn it. And as Salvian says, *Nullus salutem plus negligit quam qui Deo aliquid anteponit.* Despisers of God will prove despisers of their own salvation.

And now, brethren, what remains but that we all cry guilty of these sins, and humble our souls in the lamentation of them before the Lord! Is this *taking heed to ourselves and all the flock?* Is this like the pattern that is given us in the text? If we should now prove stout-hearted and unhumbled men, and disregard these confessions as tending to our disgrace, how sad a symptom would it be to ourselves and to the church! The ministry has been often threatened here, and is still maligned by many sorts of adversaries; though all this shows their impious malice, yet it also intimates to us God's just indignation. Believe it, brethren, the ministers of England are not the least nor last in the sin of the land. They have encouraged the common profaneness; they have led the people into divisions, and are now backward to bring them out; and as sin has been found in them, so judgments have been found and laid upon them. It is time, therefore, for us to take our part of that humiliation to which we have been so long calling our people.

We cannot but perceive that God has been offended with us, and that the voice which called this nation to repentance spoke to us as well as others. He therefore who has ears let him hear the voice of railing enemies of all sorts; the voice of those who cry, "Down with them to the ground"; all calling us to try our ways, and to reform. He who has eyes to see, let him see the precepts of repentance written in so many admirable deliverances and preservations, and in so many lines of blood. By fire and sword has God been calling us to humiliation; and as judgment has begun at the house of God, so, if humiliation begin not there too, it will be a sad prognostic to us and to the land. What, shall we deny, excuse, or extenuate our sins, while we call our people to such free confessions? Is it not better to give glory to God by a full and humble confession, than in tenderness for our own glory to seek fig-leaves to cover our nakedness, and as it were to oblige God to build his glory, which we denied him, upon the ruins of our own, which we preferred before him; and to distrain for that, by yet sorer judgments, which we denied voluntarily to surrender to him! Alas! if you put God to get his honour as he can, he can get it to your great sorrow and dishonour. If any of our hearers, in a day of humiliation, when sin is fully confessed and lamented, should be offended at the confession, and stand up against it, and say, "You wrong me: I am not so bad. You should have told me of this in private, and not have disgraced me before the congregation;"—what could we think of such a man but that he was an impenitent wretch? and as he would have no part in the confession, so he should have none in the remission. And shall we do that which we scarcely ever see the most hardened sinner do? Shall we say, This should not have been spoken of us in the ears of the people, but we should have been honoured before them. Certainly sins openly committed are more dishonourable to us when we hide them than when we confess them. It is the sin, and not the confession, that is our dishonour. We

have committed them before the sun, so that they cannot be hid. Attempts to cloak them only increase the guilt and shame. There is no way to repair the breaches which our sin has made, but by free confession and humiliation. I durst not but make confession of my own; and if any be offended that I have confessed theirs, let them know that I do but what I have done by myself. And if they dare disown the confession of their sin, let them do it at their peril. But as for the truly humble ministers of the gospel, I doubt not but they will rather be provoked more solemnly, in the face of their several congregations, to lament their sins, and promise reformation.

CHAPTER V.

Use of exhortation—Motives in the text—From our office and relation to all the flock—From the efficient cause, the Holy Ghost—From the dignity of the object—From the price paid for the church—A more particular exhortation—To see that the work of grace be advancing in our own hearts—A word to tutors and school-masters—Keep grace active and vigorous, and preach to our own hearts first—Stir up ourselves in the work, and do it with all our might—Keep up earnest desires and expectation of success—Be zealous of good works—Spare no cost—Maintain communion—The way thereto—Practise so much discipline as is certainly your duty—Faithfully discharge the duties of catechising and instructing all the flock.

HAVING disclosed and lamented our negligence and miscarriages, our duty lies plain before us. God forbid that we should now go on in the sin that we have confessed as carelessly as we did before!

Be awakened, therefore, I beseech you, brethren, by the loud and manifold voice of God, to engage more seriously in his work, to do it for the future with all your might, and to *take heed to yourselves and to all the flock*. The reasons why you should take heed to yourselves, I gave you in the beginning. The reasons why you should take heed to all the flock I shall give you now, as motives to enforce this exhortation; and

the Lord grant that they may work with us according to their truth and weight.

I. The first quickening consideration which the text here affords us, is taken from our relation to all the flock. We are *overseers* thereof. In this I shall farther show you these subordinate particulars, which will manifest the force of this consideration.

1. The nature of the office requires us to *take heed.* What else are we overseers for! Virgil says, "An overseer is a name which implies more of a burden than of honour." To be a bishop, or pastor, is not to be set up as an idol for the people to bow to, nor yet to live at our ease in fleshly delight; but it is to be the guides of sinners to salvation. The particulars of our duty we have touched before, and shall do more by-and-by. It is a sad case that men should be of a calling of which they know not the nature, and undertake they know not what. Do these men know and consider what they have undertaken who live at ease and pleasure, and have time to take their superfluous recreations, and to spend an hour or more at once in loitering and vain discourses, when so much work lies upon their hands! Brethren, do you consider where you stand, and what you have taken upon you? You have undertaken the conduct, under Christ, of a band of his soldiers, against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. You must lead them on to the sharpest conflicts; you must acquaint them with the enemy's stratagems and assaults; you must watch yourselves and keep them watching. If you miscarry, they and you may perish. You have a subtle enemy, and therefore must be wise; you have a vigilant enemy, and therefore must be vigilant; a malicious, violent, and unwearied enemy, and therefore you must be resolute, courageous, and unwearied. You are in a crowd of enemies, compassed with them on every side, and if you heed one, and not all, you will quickly fall. And O what a world of work have you to do! Had you but one ignorant old man or woman to teach, though willing

to learn, what a tedious task were it: but if they be as unwilling as ignorant, how much more difficult! But to have such a multitude of these as most of us have, what work will it find us! Who that ever tried it does not know by experience? What a pitiful life it is to reason with men who have almost lost the use of reason, and to talk with obstinate, wilful people, who know what they will do, but not why they do it; and to argue the case with them who neither understand themselves nor you, and yet think that no man has understanding who contradicts them; and who are confident they are in the right when they can show nothing but that confidence to make them so.

O, brethren, what a world of wickedness have we to contend against even in one soul, and what a number of those worlds! How deeply rooted are their sins! With what disadvantage must truth come to their ears! How strange are they to the heavenly message that we bring them; and know not what you say when you speak in the only language that they understand! And when you think you have done something, you leave your seed among the fowls of the air; wicked men are at their elbows to rise up and contradict all that you have said. They will cavil and slander you, that they may disgrace your message, draw them away from Christ, and quickly extinguish the good beginnings which you hoped you had seen. You speak but once to a sinner, for ten or twenty times that the messengers of Satan speak to him. Moreover, how easily do the cares and business of the world devour and choke, the seed which you have sown! And if it had no enemy but what is in themselves, how easily will a carnal heart extinguish those sparks which you have been long in kindling; and, for want of fuel and farther help, they will go out of themselves. Among what abundance of evil tempers and passions do you cast your gracious words, and what entertainment such companions will afford them you may easily conjecture. When you think your work happily succeeds, having seen men under trou-

ble confessing their sins, promising reformation, and living as new creatures and zealous converts; alas! after all this, they may prove unsound and false at the heart, and such as were but superficially changed, and took up new opinions, and new company, without a new heart. How many, being deceived by the cares, profits, and honours of the world, fall away while they think they stand! How many are entangled again in their former sensuality; and how many do but change a disgraceful way of flesh-pleasing for a way that is less dishonourable, and makes not so great a noise in their consciences! How many grow proud before they reach to a settled knowledge, and greedily snatch at every error that is presented to them under the name of truth; and, in confidence of the strength of their unfurnished intellects, despise those of whom they were wont to learn, and become the greatest grief to their teachers, who before rejoiced in their hopeful beginnings!

O, brethren, what a field of work is there before us! Not a person you can see but may find you work. In the saints themselves—how soon do their graces languish if you neglect them; and how easily are they drawn into crooked and forbidden paths, to the dishonour of the gospel, and their own loss and sorrow! If this be the work of a minister, you may see what a life he has to lead. Up, then, and let us be doing with all our might. Difficulties must quicken, and not discourage, in a possible and necessary work. If we cannot do all, let us do what we can; for if we neglect it, wo to us and them! Should we pass over all these needful things, and, by a plausible sermon, only think to prove ourselves faithful ministers, and to put off God and man with such a shell and visor, our reward will prove as superficial as our work.

2. Consider also that it is by your own voluntary undertaking and engagement that all this work is laid upon you. No man forced you to be overseers of the church; and does not common honesty bind you to be true to your trust?

3. Consider also that you have the *honour* to encourage you to the *labour;* and a great honour indeed it is to be the ambassadors of God, and the instruments of men's conversion and salvation; "to save men's souls from death, and cover a multitude of sins." Indeed the honour is the attendant of the work. To do therefore as the prelates of the church have often done, to strive for precedency, and fill the world with contention about the dignity and superiority of their seats, shows that they forget the nature and work of that office about which they strive. I seldom see men strive who shall go first to a poor man's cottage to teach him and his family the way to heaven, or who shall first endeavour the conversion of a sinner, or first become the servant of all. Strange that, for all the plain expressions of Christ, men will not understand the nature of their office! If they did, would they strive who would be the pastor of a whole county, and more, when there are ten thousand poor sinners in it who cry for help, and they are not so eager to engage for their relief; nay, when they can patiently live in the houses with riotous, profane persons, and not follow them seriously and incessantly for their change? They would have the name and honour of the work of a county who are not able to do all the work of a parish, when the honour is but the appendix of the work. Is it names and honour, or the work and end, that these desire? O, if they would faithfully, humbly, and self-denyingly, lay out themselves for Christ and his church, and never think of titles and reputations, they should then have honour whether they would or not: but by gaping after it they lose it. For this is the case of virtue's shadow: "I fly from that which follows me, and what flies from me I pursue."

4. Consider also you have many other excellent privileges belonging to the ministerial office to encourage you to the work. If you will not, therefore, do the work, you have nothing to do with the privileges. It is something that you are maintained by other men's

labours, and live on the commonwealth's allowance. This is for your work, that you may not be taken off it; but, as Paul requires, may wholly give yourselves to these things, and not be forced to neglect men's souls while you are providing for your own bodies. Either do the work, then, or take not the maintenance.

But you have far greater privileges yet than this. Is it nothing to be bred up to learning when others are bred at the plough and cart; and to be furnished with so much delightful knowledge when the world lies in ignorance? Is it nothing to converse with learned men, and talk of high and glorious things, when others must converse with almost none but the ignorant?

What an excellent life it is to live in studying and preaching Christ; to be still searching into his mysteries, or feeding on them; to be daily in the consideration of the blessed nature, works, or ways of God! Others are glad of the leisure of the Lord's day, and now and then an hour besides, when they can lay hold of it; but we may keep a continual Sabbath. We may do nothing else almost but study and talk of God and glory, and call upon him, and drink in his sacred, saving truths. Our employment is all high and spiritual. Whether we be alone, or with others, our business is for another world. O, were our hearts but thoroughly suited to this work, what a blessed, joyful life should we live! How sweet would our study be to us; how pleasant the pulpit; and what delight would our conference of these things afford! To live among such excellent helps as our libraries afford, and have so many silent, wise companions whenever we please, and of such variety—all these and more such privileges of the ministry demand our unwearied diligence in the work.

5. You are related to Christ as well as to the flock and he being also related to you, you are not only advanced, but secured by the relation, if you be but faithful in the work that he requires. You are the stewards of his mysteries and rulers of his household:

and He who intrusted you will maintain you in his work. But then, "it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful." Be true to him, and never doubt but he will be true to you. Do you feed his flock, and he will sooner feed you as he did Elias, than forsake you. If you be in prison, he will open the doors; but then you must relieve imprisoned souls. He will give you a tongue and wisdom that no enemy shall resist; but then you must use it faithfully for him. If you will put forth your hand to relieve the distressed, and willingly put it to his plough, he will wither the hand that is stretched out against you. The ministers of England, I am sure, know this by large experience. Many a time has God rescued them from the jaws of the devourer. O the admirable preservations and deliverances that they have had from cruel papists, from tyrannical persecutors, and misguided, passionate men!

Brethren, in the fear of God consider why it is that God has done all this! Is it for your persons, or for his church? What are you to him more than other men, but for his work and people's sake? Are you angels, or men? Is your flesh of any better mettle than your neighbours? Are you not of the same generation of sinners, and need his grace as much as they? Up, then, and work as the redeemed of the Lord, as those who are purposely rescued from ruin for his service. O do not prepare a remediless overthrow for the English ministry by your ingratitude, after all these deliverances! If you believe that God has rescued you for himself, live to him, then, as being unreservedly his, who has delivered you.

II. The second motive in the text is, *the efficient cause.* It is God, by his Spirit, who makes us overseers of his church; therefore it behooves us to take heed to ourselves and it. I have already shown you that the Holy Ghost is said to make bishops, or pastors of the church, in three several respects: By qualifying them for the office; by directing the ordainers to discern their qualifications and know the fittest men;

and by directing those ordainers, the people, and themselves, for affixing them to a particular charge. All these were done in the apostle's days, in an extraordinary manner, by inspiration, at least very frequently. The same are done now in the ordinary way of the Spirit's assistance. But it is the same Spirit still; and men are made overseers of the church, when they are rightly called, by the Holy Ghost, now as well as then. It is a strange conceit, therefore, of the papists, to think that ordination by the hands of man is of more absolute necessity in the ministerial office than the calling of the Holy Ghost. God has determined in his word that there shall be such an office, and what the work and power shall be, and what sort of men, as to their qualifications, shall receive it. None of these can be undone by man, or made unnecessary. God also gives men the qualifications which he requires. So that all the church has to do, whether pastors or people, ordainers or electors, is but to discern and determine which are the men that God has thus qualified, and to accept of them who are so provided, and upon consent to install them solemnly in this office. But I purposely cut short the contro vertible part.

What an obligation then is laid upon us by our call! If our commission be sent from heaven, it is not to be disobeyed. When Paul was called by the voice of Christ, he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. When the apostles were called by Christ from their secular employments, they immediately left friends, and house, and trade, and all, and followed him. Though our call be not so immediate or extraordinary, yet it is from the same Spirit. It is no safe course to imitate Jonah, in turning our back upon the commands of God. If we neglect our work, he has a spur to quicken us; and if we overrun it, he has messengers enough to overtake us, fetch us back, and make us do it; and it is better to do it at first than at last. This is the second motive.

III. The third motive in the text is, *the dignity of*

the object. It is the church of God that we must oversee and feed. It is that church for which the world is upheld, which is sanctified by the Holy Ghost, which is united to Christ, and is his mystical body; that church which angels are present with and attend upon as ministering spirits, whose very little ones have their angels beholding the face of God in heaven. O what a charge have we undertaken! And shall we be unfaithful? Have we the stewardship of God's own family, and shall we neglect it? Have we the guidance of those saints who shall live for ever with God in glory, and shall we neglect them? God forbid! I beseech you, brethren, let this thought awaken the negligent! You who draw back from painful, displeasing, suffering duties, and will put off men's souls with ineffectual formalities; do you think this is honourable usage of Christ's spouse? Are the souls of men thought meet by God to see his face and live for ever in his glory, and are they not worthy of your utmost cost and labour? Do you think so basely of the church of God, as if it deserved not the best of your care and help? Were you the keepers of sheep or swine, you might better let them go, and say they were not worthy of looking after; and yet you would scarcely do so if they were your own. But dare you say so by the souls of men, even by the church of God? Christ walks among them. Remember his presence, and keep all as clean as you can. The praises of the most high God are in the midst of them. They are a sanctified, peculiar people, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a choice generation, to show forth the praises of him who has called them; and yet dare you neglect them? What a high honour it is to be but one of them, yea, but a door-keeper in the house of God: but to be the priest of these priests, and the ruler of these kings—this is such an honour as multiplies your obligations to diligence and fidelity in such a noble and glorious employment.

IV. The last motive mentioned in my text is, *the price paid for the church which we oversee.* God the

Son purchased it with his own blood. O what an argument is here to quicken the negligent; and what an argument to condemn those who will not be quickened to their duty by it! "O, (says one of the ancient doctors,) if Christ had but committed to my keeping one spoonful of his blood in a fragile glass, how curiously should I have preserved it, and how tender should I have been of that glass!" If then he have committed to me the purchase of his blood, should I not as earnestly look to my charge? What, sirs, shall we despise the blood of Christ: shall we think it was shed for those who are not worthy of our utmost care! You may see here it is not a little fault that negligent pastors are guilty of. As much as in them lies the blood of Christ should be shed in vain: they would lose him those souls whom he has so dearly bought!

O then let us hear those arguments of Christ whenever we feel ourselves grow dull and careless: "Did I die for them, and wilt not thou look after them? Were they worth my blood, and are they not worth thy labour? Did I come down from heaven to seek and to save that which was lost, and wilt thou not go to the next door, or street, or village, to seek them? How small is thy labour or condescension compared to mine! I debased myself to this, but it is thy honour to be so employed. Have I done and suffered so much for their salvation; and was I willing to make thee a co-worker with me; and wilt thou refuse that little that lies upon thy hands?" Every time we look upon our congregations, let us believingly remember that they are the purchase of Christ's blood, and therefore should be regarded accordingly by us.

And think what a confusion it will be at the last day to a negligent minister to have this blood of the Son of God pleaded against him, and for Christ to say, "It was the purchase of my blood that thou didst make light of, and dost thou think to be saved by it thyself?" O, brethren, seeing Christ will bring his blood to plead with us, let it plead us to our duty, lest it plead us to damnation.

I have done with the motives in the text itself. There are many more that might be gathered from the rest of this exhortation of the apostle; but we must not stay to mention all. If the Lord set home these few upon your hearts, I dare say we shall see reason to mend our pace; and the change will be such in our hearts and in our ministry, that we ourselves and our congregations will have cause to bless God for it. I feel myself unworthy to be your monitor; but a monitor you must have; and it is better for us to hear of our sin and duty from any body than from none at all. Receive the admonition, and you will see no cause in the monitor's unworthiness to repent of it; but if you reject it, the unworthiest messenger may bear that witness against you which will confound you.

Before I leave this exhortation, as I have applied it to our general work, so I shall carry it a little farther to some of the *special parts and modes of our duty* which were before expressed.

I. *See that the work of saving grace be thoroughly wrought on your own souls.* It is a fearful case to be an unsanctified professor, but much more to be an unsanctified preacher. Does it not make you tremble when you open the Bible, lest you should there read the sentence of your own condemnation? When you pen your sermons, little do you think that you are drawing up indictments against your own souls! When you are arguing against sin, you are aggravating your own; when you proclaim to your hearers the riches of God's grace, you publish your own iniquity in rejecting it, and your unhappiness in being without it. What can you do in persuading men to come to Christ, in drawing them from the world, in urging them to a life of faith and holiness; but conscience, if it were awake, might tell you that you speak all this to your own confusion! If you mention hell, you mention your own inheritance; if you describe the joys of heaven, you describe your misery that have no right to it. What can you devise

to say, for the most part, that will not be against your own souls? O miserable life, that a man should study and preach against himself, and spend all his days in a course of self-condemnation! A graceless, unexperienced preacher, is one of the most unhappy creatures upon earth; and yet he is usually most insensible of his unhappiness: for he has so many counterfeits, which seem like the gold of saving grace, and so many splendid stones, which seem like the Christian's jewel, that he is seldom troubled with the thoughts of his poverty; but thinks he is rich and wants nothing, when he is poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. He is acquainted with the Holy Scripture, he is exercised in holy duties, he does not live in open disgraceful sin, he serves at God's altar, he reproves other men's faults, and preaches up holiness both of heart and life; and how can this man choose but be holy? O what an aggravated misery is this, to perish in the midst of plenty; and to famish with the bread of life in our hands, offering it to others, and urging it on them: that those ordinances of God should be the occasions of our delusion, which are instituted to be the means of our conviction and salvation; and that while we hold the looking-glass of the gospel to others, to show them the true face of the state of their souls, we should either look on the back of it ourselves, where we can see nothing, or turn it aside, that it may misrepresent us to ourselves.

If such a wretched man would take my counsel, he should make a stand, and call his heart and life to an account, and fall a preaching a while to himself, before he preach any more to others; he should consider whether food in the mouth will nourish that goes not in the stomach; whether it be a Christ in the mouth or in the heart that will save men; whether he who names him should not depart from iniquity; whether God will hear their prayers, if they regard iniquity in their hearts; whether it will serve the turn at the day of reckoning to say, "Lord, we have prophesied in thy name," when they shall hear, "Depart from me. I

know you not;" what comfort will it be to Judas when he is gone to his own place, to remember that he preached with the rest of the apostles, or that he sat with Christ, and was called by him, friend: and whether a wicked preacher shall stand in the judgment, or sinners in the assembly of the just? When such thoughts as these have entered into his soul, and kindly wrought a while upon his conscience, I would advise him next to go to the congregation, and there preach over Origen's* Sermon on Psalm l. 16, 17; "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do

* *Origen* lived in the latter part of the second, and beginning of the third century. He was trained up by his father from his infancy in the Christian religion, and in the knowledge of literature; but especially in the knowledge of the sacred Scriptures. When he was seventeen years old, his father being carried to prison, he had such a fervent desire to suffer martyrdom with him, that he would have thrust himself into the persecutors' hands, had he not been prevented by his mother, who, in the night, stole away his clothes; hence, for shame of being seen naked, and not from fear of dying, he was constrained to stay at home.

"After he entered into the sacred work of the ministry, many of the Gentiles resorted to his lectures, and were, by the blessing of God upon his word, truly converted to Christianity. In this employment he prospered exceedingly, and purchased to himself a famous name among all the faithful, particularly by cheerfully embracing and mightily encouraging the martyrs. He visited such as were in deep dungeons and close imprisonment, encouraged them when they were to receive their last sentence, and also after sentence was pronounced: yea, he accompanied them to the place of execution, often putting himself thereby into great danger. He boldly embraced and kissed them at their farewell, so that once the heathens, in their furious rage, had stoned him to death, if the power of God had not marvellously delivered him. He was so extremely hated by the infidels, that soldiers were hired to guard his house by the multitudes who came to him to be instructed in the Christian faith. The rage of his enemies was so violent against him for this cause, that he could not, with safety, walk the streets of Alexandria. He was obliged frequently to change his lodgings, thereby to escape the pursuers.

"In the reign of *Decius* he underwent, for the doctrine of Christ, bands and torments in his body, rackings with bars of iron, dungeons, besides terrible threats of death and burning, and divers other torments; all which he courageously and patiently suffered for Christ. At length, hearing that some Christians were carried to an idol temple, to force them to sacrifice, he ran thither, out of zeal to encourage and dissuade them from it. This was what his adversaries expected and wished for; and, therefore, letting go the others, they laid hold upon him, giving him his choice, either to

to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and hast cast my words behind thee." And when he has read this text, to sit down, and expound, and apply it by his tears; and then to make a free confession of his sin, and lament his case before the assembly, and desire their earnest prayers to God for pardoning and renewing grace; and so to close with Christ in heart, who before admitted him no farther than into the brain, that hereafter he may preach a Christ whom he knows, feel what he speaks, and commend the riches of the gospel by experience.

It is the common danger and calamity of the church to have unregenerate and inexperienced pastors; and to have men become preachers before they are Christians; to be sanctified by dedication to the altar, as God's priests, before they are sanctified by hearty dedication to Christ as his disciples; and so to worship an unknown God, and to preach an unknown Christ, an unknown Spirit, an unknown state of holiness and communion with God, and a glory that is unknown, and likely to be unknown to them for ever. He is

offer incense to the idol, or have his body defiled with a foul and ugly blackmoor, whom they had prepared for the purpose. Origen being in a miserable strait, at last chose rather to offer incense than have his chaste body polluted by such a filthy creature. Then they immediately put incense into his trembling hands, and while he demurred about it, they took his hands and caused him to throw it into the fire; upon which they cried aloud, 'Origen hath sacrificed! Origen hath sacrificed!' After which he was excommunicated by the church; and being filled with shame and sorrow, he left Alexandria, and went into Judea. When he came to Jerusalem, being well known there by his learned expositions, and gift of utterance, he was entreated by the ministers to give them a sermon in the church. After much importunity, being in a manner constrained thereto, he stood up, took his Bible, opened it, and the first place he cast his eye upon was Psalm l. 16, 17, *But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and hast cast my words behind thee.* Which words, as soon as he had read, he closed the book, sat down, and burst into a flood of tears, (the whole congregation weeping with him.) so that he could not say any more to them. After this he wandered up and down in great grief and distress of conscience, and wrote his famous lamentation."—See CLARK's *Lives of the Fathers.*

likely to be but a heartless preacher who has not the Christ and grace that he preaches in his heart. O that all our students in the university would well consider this! What a poor business it is to themselves to spend their time in knowing some little of the works of God, and some of those names that the divided tongues of the nations have imposed on them, and not to know the Lord himself, exalt him in their hearts, nor to be acquainted with that one renewing work that should make them happy. They do but walk in a vain show, and spend their lives like dreaming men, while they busy their wits and tongues about abundance of names and notions, and are strangers to God and the life of saints. If ever God awaken them by his grace, they will have cogitations and employments so much more serious than their unsanctified studies and disputations were, that they will confess they did but dream before. A world of business they make themselves about *nothing*, while they are wilful strangers to the primitive, independent, necessary Being, who is all in all. Nothing can be rightly known, if God be not known; nor is any study well managed, nor to any great purpose, where God is not studied. We know but little of the creature, till we know it as it stands in its order and respect to God: single letters and syllables unconnected are nonsense. He who overlooks the Alpha and Omega, and sees not the beginning and end, and Him in all, who is the *all* of all, sees nothing at all. All creatures are, as such, broken syllables: they signify nothing as separated from God. Were they separated *actually*, they would cease to be, and the separation would be an annihilation; and when we separate them in our *fancies*, we make *nothing* of them to ourselves. It is one thing to know the creatures as Aristotle, and another thing to know them as a Christian. None but a Christian can read one line of his physics, so as to understand it rightly. It is a high and excellent study, and of greater use than many well understand; but it is the smallest part of it that Aristotle can teach us. When

man was made perfect, and placed in a perfect world, where all things were in perfect order and very good, the whole creation was then man's book, in which he was to read the nature and will of his great Creator; every creature had the name of God so legibly engraven on it, that man might run and read it. He could not open his eyes without seeing some image of God, but nowhere so full and lively as in himself; and, therefore, it was his work to study the whole volume of nature, but first and chiefly to study himself. If man had held on in this prescribed work, he would have continued and increased in the knowledge of God and himself; but when he would needs know and love the creature and himself in a way of separation from God, he lost the knowledge of all, both of the creature, himself, and God, so far as it could beatify, and was worth the name of knowledge; and, instead of it, he has got the unhappy knowledge which he affected, even the empty notions and fantastic knowledge of the creature and himself as thus separated. Thus he who lived to and upon the Creator, now lives to and upon the other creatures and himself; and thus "every man at his best state (the learned as well as the illiterate) is altogether vanity—surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain," Psa. xxxix, 5, 6. It must be well observed, that as God laid not aside the relation of a Creator by becoming our Redeemer, nor the right of his propriety and government of us in that relation, but the work of redemption stands in some subordination to that of creation, and the law of the Redeemer to the law of the Creator; so also the duties that we owed God as Creator have not ceased, but the duties that we owe to the Redeemer, as such, are subordinate thereto. It is the work of Christ to bring us back to God from whom we fell, and to restore us to our perfection of holiness and obedience; and as he is the way to the Father, so faith in him is the way to our former employment and enjoyment of God. I hope you perceive what I aim at in all this, viz., that to see

God in his creatures, to love him, and converse with him, was the employment of man in his upright state; that this is so far from ceasing to be our duty, that it is the work of Christ to bring us back to it: and, therefore, the most holy men are the most excellent students of God's works, and none but the holy can rightly study or know them. His works are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein; but not for themselves, but for him that made them. Your study of physics and other sciences is not worth a rush if it be not God by them that you seek after. To see and admire, to reverence and adore, to love and delight in God appearing to us in his works, and purposely to peruse them for the knowledge of God, this is the true and only philosophy, and the contrary is mere folly, and is called so again and again by God himself. This is the sanctification of your studies, when they are devoted to God, and when he is the life of them all, and they are directed to him as their end and principal object.

Therefore, I shall presume to tell you by the way, that it is a grand error, and of dangerous consequence in the Christian academies, (pardon the censure from one so unfit for it, seeing the necessity of the case commands it,) that they study the creature before the Redeemer, and set themselves to physics, and metaphysics, and mathematics, before they set themselves to theology; whereas no man who has not the vitals of theology is capable of going beyond a fool in philosophy; and all that such do is but doting about questions and opposition of sciences, falsely so called. And as by affecting a separated creature-knowledge Adam fell from God, so they who mind these profane, empty babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called, miss the end of all right study; they err concerning the faith; while they will needs prefer these, they miss that faith which they pretend to aim at. Their pretence is, that theology, being the end, and the most perfect branch, must be the last, and all the subservient sciences must go before it. (1.) There is some

natural knowledge indeed prerequisite, and somewhat of art, before any can receive theology; but that is no more than their mothers can teach them before they go to school. (2.) All right natural knowledge tends to the increase of theological knowledge; but that which is a means to its perfection may be the effect or consequence of its beginning. (3.) The end must be first known, because it must be intended before the choice or use of means. (4.) The Scripture reveals to us the things of God himself in the most easy way, and therefore he must be first learned there. (5.) The book of the creatures is not to show us more of God than the Scripture does; but, by representing him to us in more sensible appearances, to make our knowledge of him the more intense and operative; and being continually before our eyes, God also would be continually before them, if we could aright discern him in them.

It is evident therefore that theology must lay the ground and lead the way in all our studies, when we are once so far acquainted with words and things as is needful to our understanding the sense of its principles. If God must be searched after in our search of the creatures, and we must affect no separated knowledge of them, then tutors must read God to their pupils in all; and divinity must be the beginning, the middle, the end, the life, the all of their studies; and our physics and metaphysics must be reduced to theology, and nature must be read as one of God's books, which is purposely written for the revelation of himself. The Holy Scripture is the easiest book. When you have first learned God and his will there, in the necessary things, address yourselves cheerfully to the study of his works, that you may see there the creature itself as your alphabet, and their order as the connection of syllables, words, and sentences, and God as the subject matter of all, and their respect to him as the sense or signification; and then carry on both together, and never more play the mere scriveners; stick no more in your letters and words, but read

every creature as a Christian or a divine. If you see not yourselves and all things as living, and moving, and having being in God, you see nothing, whatever you think you see. If you perceive not in your perusals of the creatures, that God is all, and in all, you may think perhaps that you know something, but you know nothing as you ought to know. He who sees and loves God in the creature, the same is known and loved of him. Think not so basely of the works of God and your physics as that they are only preparatory studies for boys. It is a most high and noble part of holiness to search after, behold, admire, and love the great Creator in all his works. How much have the saints of God been employed in it! The beginning of Genesis, the books of Job and the Psalms, may acquaint us that our physics are not so little akin to theology as some suppose. I do therefore, in zeal to the good of the church, and their own success in their most necessary labours, propound it to the consideration of all pious tutors, whether they should not as early and as diligently read to their pupils, or cause them to read, the chief parts of practical divinity (and there is no other) as any of the sciences; and whether they should not go together from the very first? It is well that they hear sermons; but that is not enough. If they have need of private help in philosophy besides public lectures, how much more in theology! If tutors would make it their principal business to acquaint their pupils with the doctrine of life, and labour to set it home upon their hearts, that all might be received according to its weight, and read to their hearts as well as to their heads, and so carry on the rest of their instructions, that it might appear they made them but subservient to this, and that their pupils may feel what they drive at in all, and so that they would teach all their philosophy *in habitu theologico*, this might be a happy means to make happy souls, a happy church and commonwealth. The same I mean also respecting schoolmasters to their scholars. But when languages and philosophy have almost all their

time and diligence, and instead of reading philosophy like divines, they read divinity like philosophers, as if it were a thing of no more moment than a lesson of music or arithmetic, and not the doctrine of everlasting life; this is what blasts so many in the bud, and pesters the church with unsanctified teachers. Hence it is that we have so many worldlings to preach of the invisible felicity, and so many carnal men to declare the mysteries of the Spirit; and I would I had not cause to say, so many infidels to preach Christ, or so many atheists to preach the living God; and when they are taught philosophy before or without religion, what wonder if their philosophy be all, or most of their religion; if they grow up into admirations of their unprofitable fancies, and deify their own deluded brains, when they know no other God; and if they reduce all their theology to their philosophy, as some have done.

Again: I address myself to all those who have the education of youth, especially in order to prepare them for the ministry. You who are schoolmasters and tutors, begin and end with the things of God. Speak daily to the hearts of your scholars those things which must be wrought into their hearts, or else they will be undone. Let some piercing words fall frequently from your mouths, of God, the state of their souls, and the life to come. Do not say they are too young to understand and entertain them. You little know what impressions they may make which you discern not. Not only the soul of that boy, but a congregation, or many souls therein, may have cause to bless God for your zeal and diligence, yea, for one such seasonable word. You have a great advantage above others to do them good. You have them before they are grown to the worst, and they will hear you when they will not hear another. If they are destined to the ministry, you are preparing them for the special service of God; and should they not first have the knowledge of him whom they must serve? O think with yourselves what a sad thing it will be to their

own souls, and what a wrong to the church of God, if they come out from you with carnal hearts to so holy, spiritual, and great a work! Of a hundred students that are in one of your colleges, how many may there be who are serious, experienced, godly men: some talk of too small a number. If you should send one half of them on a work that they are unfit for, what bloody work will they make in the church! Whereas if you be the means of their thorough sanctification, how many souls may bless you, and what greater good can you possibly do the church! When their hearts are once savingly affected with the doctrine which they study and preach, they will study it heartily, and preach it heartily. Their own experience will direct them to the fittest subjects, furnish them with the matter, and quicken them to set it home. I observe that the best of our hearers can feel and savour such experimental preachers, and usually less regard others, whatever may be their accomplishments. See therefore that you make not work for sequestrators, nor for the groans and lamentation of the church, nor for the great tormenter of the murderer of souls.

II. Content not yourselves to have the main work of grace; but *be also very careful that your graces be kept in life and action, and that you preach to yourselves the sermons you study before you preach them to others.* If you did this for your own sakes it would not be lost labour: but I am speaking to you on account of the public, and that you would do it for the sake of the church. When your minds are in a heavenly and holy frame, your people are likely to partake of the fruits of it. Your prayers, praises, and doctrine will be heavenly and sweet to them. They will feel when you have been much with God. That which is most on your hearts is likely to be most in their ears. I confess, I speak it by lamentable experience, that I publish to my flock the distempers of my soul. When I let my heart grow cold, my preaching is cold; and when it is confused my preaching is so too: and I can observe the same fre-

quently in the best of my hearers, that, when I have a while grown cold in preaching, they have cooled accordingly; and the next prayers that I have heard from them have been too much like my preaching. We are the nurses of Christ's little ones. If we forbear our food we shall famish them; they will quickly find it in the want of milk, and we may quickly see it again in them in the cold and dull discharge of their several duties. If we let our love go down, we are not likely to raise theirs up. If we abate our holy care and fear, it will appear in our doctrine. If the matter show it not, the manner will. If we feed on unwholesome food, either errors or fruitless controversies, our hearers are likely to fare the worse for it. Whereas if we abound in faith, love, and zeal, how will it overflow to the refreshing of our congregations, and how will it appear in the increase of the same graces in others.

O, brethren, watch therefore over your own hearts! Keep out sinful passions and worldly inclinations; keep up the life of faith and love; be much at home; and be much with God. If it be not your daily, serious business to study your own hearts, subdue corruptions, and live as upon God; if you do not make it your very work, which you constantly attend, all will go amiss, and you will starve your auditors; or if you have but an affected fervency, you cannot expect a blessing to attend it: above all, be much in secret prayer and meditation. Thence you must fetch the heavenly fire that must kindle your sacrifices. Remember you cannot decline and neglect your duty to your own hurt alone: many will be losers by it as well as you. For your people's sake, therefore, look to your hearts. If a pang of spiritual pride should overtake you, and you should grow into any dangerous or schismatical conceits, and vent your own overvalued inventions to draw away disciples after you, what a wound might this prove to the church that you are set over; and you might become a plague to them instead of a blessing, and cause them to wish

they had never seen your faces. O take heed, therefore, of your own judgments and affections! Error and vanity will slily insinuate, and seldom come without fair pretences. Great distempers and apostacies have usually small beginnings. The prince of darkness frequently personates the angels of light, that he may draw children of light again into his darkness. How easily also will distempers creep in upon our affections, and our first love, and fear, and care abate! Watch therefore for the sake of yourselves and others.

More particularly, a minister should take some special pains with his heart before he goes to the congregation. If it be then cold, how can he expect to warm the hearts of the hearers? Go therefore, then, especially to God for life; and read some rousing, awakening book, or meditate on the weight of the subject that you are to speak of, and on the great necessity of your people's souls, that you may go in the zeal of the Lord into his house.

III. *Stir up yourselves to the great work of God when you are upon it, and see that you do it with all your might.* Though I move you not to a constant loudness, (for that will make your fervency contemptible,) yet see that you have a constant seriousness; and when the matter requires it, (as it should do in the application at least of every doctrine,) then lift up your voice, spare not your spirits, and speak to them as to men that must be awakened either here or in hell. Look upon your congregations believingly, and with compassion, and think in what a state of joy or torment they must all be for ever; and then, I think, it will make you earnest, and melt your heart with a sense of their condition. O, speak not one cold or careless word about so great a business as heaven or hell! Whatever you do, let the people see that you are in good earnest.

Truly, brethren, they are great works that are to be done, and you must not think that trifling will despatch them. You cannot break men's hearts by jesting with them, telling them a smooth tale, or patching

up a gaudy oration. Men will not cast away their dearest pleasures at the drowsy request of one who seems not to mean as he speaks, or to care much whether his request be granted. If you say, "The work is God's, and he may do it by the weakest means;" I answer, It is true he may; but yet his ordinary way is to work by means, and to make not only the matter that is preached, but also the manner of preaching, instrumental to the work: or else it were a small matter whom he should employ that would but speak the truth. If grace made as little use of the ministerial persuasions as some conceive, we need not so much mind a reformation, nor cast out the insufficient.

A great matter also with most of our hearers lies in the very pronunciation and tone of speech. The best matter will scarcely move them if it be not movingly delivered. Especially see that there be no affectation, but that we speak as familiarly to our people as we would do if we were talking to them personally. The want of a familiar tone and expression is as great a defect in the delivery of most of us as any thing whatsoever, and that which we should be very careful to amend. When a man has a reading or declaiming tone, like a school-boy saying his lesson or an oration, few are moved with any thing that he says. Let us therefore rouse ourselves up to the work of the Lord, and speak to our people as for their lives, and save them as by violence, pulling them out of the fire. Satan will not not be charmed out of his possession. We must lay siege to the souls of sinners, which are his garrisons, find out where his chief strength lies, lay the battery of God's ordnance against it, and ply it closely till a breach be made; and then suffer them not by their shifts to make it up again; but find out their common objections, and give them a full and satisfactory answer. We have reasonable creatures to deal with; and as they abuse their reason against the truth, so they will have better reason for it before they obey. We must therefore see that all our sermons be convincing, and that we make the light of Scripture

and reason shine so bright in the faces of the ungodly that it may force them to see, unless they wilfully shut their eyes. A sermon, full of mere words, how neatly soever it be composed, while there is wanting the light of evidence and the life of zeal, is but an image or a well-dressed carcass. In preaching there is intended a communion of souls, and a communication of somewhat from ours to theirs. As we and they have understandings, and wills, and affections, so must the bent of our endeavours be to communicate the fullest light of evidence from our understandings to theirs, and to warm their hearts by kindling in them holy affections, as by a communication from ours. The great things which we have to commend to our hearers have reason enough on their side, and lie plain before them in the word of God. We should, therefore, be so furnished with evidence as to come as with a torrent upon their understandings, and bear down all before us; and with our dilemmas and expostulations to bring them to a nonplus, and pour shame upon all their vain objections, that they may be forced to yield to the power of truth, and see that it is great and will prevail.

IV. *Keep up earnest desires and expectations of success.* If your hearts be not set on the end of your labours, and you long not to see the conversion and edification of your hearers, and do not study and preach in hope, you are not likely to see much fruit of it. It is an ill sign of a false, self-seeking heart, that can be content to be still doing and see no fruit of his labour. So I have observed that God seldom blesses any man's work so much as his whose heart is set upon success. Let it be the property of such as Judas to have more regard to the bag than to their business, and not to care much for what they pretend to care; and to think, if they have their tithes and the love and commendations of the people, that they have enough to satisfy them. But let all who preach for Christ and men's salvation be unsatisfied till they gain the objects of their preaching. He has not the right

motives of a preacher who is indifferent whether he obtain them, is not grieved when he misses them, and rejoiced when he sees the desired issue. When a man only studies what to say, and how, with commendation, to spend the hour, and looks no more after it, unless it be to know what people think of his own abilities, and thus holds on from year to year; I must needs think that this man preaches for himself, drives on a private trade of his own, and does not preach for Christ, even when he preaches Christ, how excellently soever he may seem to do it. No wise or charitable physician is content to be still giving physic and see no amendment among his patients, but have them all to die upon his hands; nor will any wise and honest school-master be content to be still teaching, though his scholars profit not; but either of them would grow weary of the employment. I know that a faithful minister may have comfort when he wants success; and, though Israel be not gathered, our reward is with the Lord; and our acceptance is not according to the fruit, but according to our labour. If God set us to wash blackamoors, and cure those who will not be cured, we shall not lose our labour, though we perform not the cure. But then he who does not long for the success of his labours can have none of this comfort, because he was not a faithful labourer: this is only for them that I speak of, who are set upon the end, and grieved if they miss it. This is not the full comfort that we must desire, but only such a part as may quiet us though we miss the rest. What, if God will accept a physician, though the patient die! He must work in compassion, long for a better issue, and be sorry if he miss it, for all that; for it is not only our own reward that we labour for, but other men's salvation. I confess, for my part, I marvel at some ancient and reverend men, who have lived twenty, forty, or fifty years, with an unprofitable people, where they have seen so little fruit of their labours, that it was scarcely discernible how they can with so much patience still go on! Were it my case, though I durst

not leave the vineyard nor my calling, yet I should suspect that it was God's will I should go somewhere else, and another take my place who might be fitter for them; and I should not be easily satisfied to spend my days in such a manner.

V. *Do well as well as say well.* Be zealous of good works. Spare not any cost, if it may promote your Master's work.

1. Maintain your innocence, and walk without offence. Let your lives condemn sin and persuade men to duty. Would you have your people be more careful of their souls than you are of yours? If you would have them redeem their time, do not you misspend yours. If you would not have them vain in their conversation, see that you speak yourselves the things which may edify and tend to minister grace to the hearers. Order your own families well, if you would have them do so by theirs. Be not proud and lordly, if you would have them to be lowly. There is no virtue wherein your example will do more, at least to abate men's prejudice, than humility, and meekness, and self-denial. Forgive injuries, and be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Do as our Lord, who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. If sinners be stubborn and contemptuous, flesh and blood will persuade you to take up their weapons, and to master them by their carnal means; but that is not the way, farther than necessary self-preservation, or public good requires it; but overcome them with kindness, patience, and gentleness. The former may show that you have more worldly power than they, wherein yet they are, for the most part, too hard for the faithful; but it is the latter only that will tell them that you outdo them in spiritual excellence, and in the true qualifications of a saint. If you think that Christ is more worthy of being imitated than Cesar or Alexander, and that it is more glorious to be a Christian than to be a conqueror, yea, to be a man than a beast, which often exceeds us in strength, then contend with charity, and not with violence; and set meekness,

love, and patience, against force, and not force against force. Remember you are obliged to be the servants of all. Condescend to men of low estate. Be not strange to the poor of your flock. They are apt to take your strangeness for contempt. Familiarity, improved to holy ends, is exceedingly necessary, and may do abundance of good. Speak not stoutly or disrespectfully to any one: but be courteous to the meanest as your equal in Christ. A kind and winning carriage is a cheap way of advantage to do men good.

2. Remember what I said before of works of charity. Go to the poor, and see what they want, and show at once your compassion to soul and body. Buy them a catechism, and some small books that are most likely to do them good; and bestow them on your neighbours, and make them promise you to read them; and especially to spend that part of the Lord's day therein which they can spare from greater duties. Stretch your purse to the utmost, and do all the good you can. Think not of being rich; seek not great things for yourselves or posterity. What, if you impoverish yourselves to do a greater good, will it be loss or gain? If you believe that God is your safest purse-bearer, and that to expend in his service is the greatest usury, and the most thriving trade, show them that you believe it. I know that flesh and blood will cavil before it will lose its prey, and will never want somewhat to say against that duty which is against its interest. But mark what I say, and may the Lord set it home upon your hearts: That man who has any thing in the world so dear to him that he cannot spare it for Christ, if he call for it, is no true Christian. And, because a carnal heart will not believe that Christ calls for it when he cannot spare it, and, therefore, makes that his self-deceiving shift; I say farther, That that man who will not be persuaded that duty is duty, because he cannot spare that for Christ which is therein to be expended, is no true Christian: for a false heart corrupts the understanding, and that again increases the delusions of the heart. Do not take it therefore as an undoing

to make you friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, and to lay up a treasure in heaven, though you leave yourselves but little on earth.

I know, where the heart is carnal and covetous, words will not wring the money out of their hands. They can say all this and more to others: but saying is one thing, and believing is another. But with those who are true believers, methinks, such considerations should prevail. O what abundance of good might ministers do, if they would but live in a contempt of the world, and the riches and glory of it, and expend all they have for their Master's use, and pinch their flesh that they might have wherewith to do good. This would unlock more hearts to the reception of their doctrine than all their oratory will do; and, without this, singularity in religion will appear but hypocrisy, and it is likely that it is so. Though we need not do as the papists, who betake them to monasteries and cast away property, yet we must have nothing but what we have for God.

VI. *Maintain your Christian and brotherly unity and communion, and do as much of God's work as you can in unanimity and holy concord.* Blessed be the Lord that it is so well with us in this county, with regard to this, as it is! We lose our authority with our people when we divide. They will yield to us when we go together, who would resist and contemn the best of us alone. Two things in order to this I beseech you to observe:—

1. Still maintain your meetings for communion, incorporate and hold all Christian correspondence, grow not strange to one another, do not say that you have business of your own to do when you should be at any such meeting or other work for God. It is not only the mutual edification that we receive by lectures, disputations, or conferences, (though that is not to be disregarded,) but is especially for consultations for the common good, and maintaining our communion, that we must thus assemble. Though your own persons might be without the benefit of such meetings, yet

the church and our common work require them. Do not then show yourselves contemners or neglecters of such a necessary work. Distance breeds strangeness, and foments dividing flames and jealousies, which communion will prevent or cure. Our enemies' chief plot is to divide us, that they may weaken us. Conspire not therefore with the enemies, and take not their course. Indeed, ministers have need of one another, and must improve the gifts of God in one another; and the self-sufficient are the most deficient, being proud and empty men. Some there are who come not among their brethren to do or receive good, nor afford them any of their assistance in consultation for the common good, and their excuse is, "We love to live privately." To whom I say, Why do you not, on the same grounds, forbear going to church, and say you love to live privately? Is not ministerial communion a duty as well as common Christian communion; and has not the church always thought so, and practised accordingly? If you mean that you love your own ease or convenience better than God's services, say so, and speak your minds. But I suppose there are few who think that any just excuse, though they will give us no better. Something else lies at the bottom.

2. Unite in necessary truths, and tolerate tolerable failings; bear with one another in things that may be borne with, and do not make a larger creed and more necessaries than God has done: and to that end let no man's writings, nor the judgment of any party, though right, be taken as a test, or made that rule. (1.) Lay not too great stress upon controverted opinions which have godly men, and especially whole churches, on both sides. (2.) Lay not too great stress on those controversies that are ultimately resolved into philosophical uncertainties, as some unprofitable controversies are about free will, the manner of the Spirit's operation of grace, the divine decrees, and predetermination. (3.) Lay not too great stress on those controversies that are merely verbal, and which, if

they were anatomized, would appear to be no more. Of which sort are far more (I speak it confidently upon certain knowledge) that now make a great noise in the world, and tear the church, than almost any of the eager contenders that ever I spoke with will believe. (4.) Lay not too much on any point of faith which was disowned or unknown to the whole church of Christ in any age since the Scriptures were delivered us. (5.) Much less should you lay too much on those wh ch any of the more pure and judicious ages were wholly ignorant of. (6.) And least of all should you lay too much on any point which no one age since the apostles ever received.

He who shall live in that happy time when God will heal his broken churches, shall see all this that I am now pleading for reduced to practice. Then this moderation will take place, and also Scripture sufficiency, and all men's confessions and comments be valued only as subservient helps, and not be made the test of church communion, any farther than they are exactly the same with Scripture. And till the healing age come, we cannot expect that healing truths will be entertained, because there are not healing spirit sin the leaders of the church. But when the work is to be done the workmen will be fitted for it, and blessed will be the agents of so glorious a work.

But because the love of unity and truth, peace and purity, must be conjunctly manifested, we must avoid the extremes, both in doctrines and communion. The extremes in doctrine are on one side by innovating additions, and on the other by envying and hindering the progress of the light. (1.) By making new points of faith or duty. (2.) By making those points to be fundamental, or necessary to salvation, that are not so.

The other extreme about doctrine is, by hindering the progress of knowledge; and this is commonly on pretence of avoiding the innovating extreme. It must be considered therefore how far we may grow, and not be culpable innovaters. (1.) Our knowledge must increase extensively *ad plura*. We must know more

truths than we knew before, though we may not feign more. There is much of Scripture that will remain unknown to us when we have done our best. Though we shall find out no more articles of faith which must be explicitly believed by all who will be saved, yet we may find out the sense of more particular texts, and several doctrinal truths, not contrary to the former, but such as befriend them and are connected with them. And we may find out more the order of truths, and how they are placed in respect to one another; and so see more of the true method of theology than we did, which will give us a very great light into the matter itself, and its ramifications and consequences. (2.) Our knowledge also must grow subjectively, intensively, and in the manner as well as in the matter of it. And this is our principal growth: to know the same great and necessary truths with a *sounder* and *clearer* knowledge than we did. This is done by getting strong evidence and reasons instead of the weak ones which we trusted to before: (for many young persons receive truths on uncertain grounds:) by multiplying our evidence and reasons for the same truth: by a clearer and deeper apprehension of the same evidence and reasons which before we had but superficially received; for one who is strong in knowledge sees the same truth as in the noon-day light, which the weak see but as in the twilight. To all this must be added the more full improvement of the truth received to its intended and proper end.

I shall give you the sum of my meaning in the words of that great enemy of innovation, Vincent. 'But some one perhaps may say, 'Is there then no progress to be attained in the church of Christ?' Truly there is a progress in religion to be attained, and that a very great one; for who would be so envious to man, and hateful to God, as to endeavour to hinder it? Yet let it be really a progress in faith, not an innovation; since it belongs to perfection that every thing should be increased in itself: but when some

thing is changed from one to another, again and again, it tends to innovation. Therefore there should be an increase and a great and eager proficiency both of individuals and of all, as well of one man as of the whole church, during life, and in all ages, in the *degree* of knowledge, science, and wisdom: but it should be only in the same *kind*, the same tenets, the same sense, and the same judgment." And he speaks more plainly and briefly when he says, "For it is right that those ancient tenets of heavenly philosophy should be extended, polished, and dressed in process of time: but by no means be changed. They may receive evidence, light, and precision: but it is necessary that they retain their fulness, integrity, and propriety." Let this mean then be observed, if we would practise both truth and peace.

Having said thus much of the means, I return to the end of this exhortation; beseeching all the ministers of Christ to compassionate the poor divided church, and to entertain such catholic principles and charitable dispositions as tend to their own and the common peace. Has any thing in the world done more to lose our authority, and unfit us for God's service, than our differences and divisions? If ministers could but be all of a mind, or at least concur in the substance of the work, so that the people who hear one, might, as it were, hear all, and not have any of us to head a party for the discontented to fall into, or to object against the rest, we might then do wonders for the church of Christ. But if our tongues and hearts be divided, what wonder if our work be spoiled, and prove more like a Babel than a temple of God! Get together therefore speedily, consult for peace, do not cherish heart-burnings, and continue not uncharitable distances and strangeness. If dividing have weakened you, closing must recover your authority and strength. If you have any dislike to your brethren or their ways, manifest it by a free debate to their faces, but do not unnecessarily withdraw from them. If you will but keep together, you may come to a

better understanding of each other. Especially quarrel not upon points of precedence, or reputation, or any interest of your own. No man will have settled peace in his mind, nor be peaceable in his place, who proudly envies the precedence of others, and secretly grudges at those who seem to cloud his parts and name. One or other will ever be an eye-sore to such. There is too much of the devil's image in this sin for an humble servant of Christ to entertain.

Moreover, be not too sensible of injuries; and make not a great matter of every offensive word or deed. At least, do not let it interrupt your communion and concord in God's work: that were to wrong Christ and his church, because another has wronged you. If you be of this impatient humour, you will never be quiet; for we are all faulty, and cannot live together without trying one another. Proud, over tender men, are often hurt by their own conceits. They frequently think a man jeers them and contemns them, or means them ill, when it never came into his thoughts. Till this self be taken down, we shall every man have a private interest, and of his own, which will lead us all into several ways, and spoil the peace and welfare of the church. While every man is for himself and his own reputation, and all mind their own things, no wonder if they mind not the things of Christ.

VII. *No longer neglect the execution of so much discipline in your congregations as is confessedly necessary and right.* I desire not to spur on any one to an unseasonable performance of the greatest duty. But will it never be a fit season? Would you forbear sermons and sacraments so many years on pretence of their being unseasonable? Will you have a better season for it when you are dead? How many have died before they did any thing in this work, who were long preparing for it! It is near three years since many of us now present engaged ourselves to this duty; and have we been faithful in the performance of that engagement? I know some have more discourage-

ments and hinderances than others: but what discouragements can excuse us from such a duty? Besides the reasons that we then considered, let these few be farther laid to heart.

1. How sad a sign do we make it to be in our preaching to our people, to live in the wilful, continued omission of any known duty! And shall we do so year after year, yea, all our days? If excuses will take away the danger of this sign, what man will not find them as well as you? Amesius says, "Yea, he sins against Christ, the author and instituton of it, whoever does not all that in him lies to establish and promote this discipline in the churches of God." And do you think it safe to live and die in such a known sin?

2. We manifest laziness and sloth, if not unfaithfulness, in the work of Christ. I speak from experience. It was laziness that kept me off so long, and pleaded hard against this duty. It is indeed a troublesome and painful work, and such as calls for some self-denial, because it will expose us to the displeasure of the wicked. But dare we prefer our ease and quietness, and the love or peace of wicked men, before our service to Christ our Master? Can slothful servants look for a good reward?

Remember, brethren, that we, of this county, have thus promised before God, in the second article of our agreement: "We agree and resolve, by God's help, that, so far as God makes known our duty to us, we will faithfully endeavour to discharge it; and will not desist through any fears or losses in our estates, or the frowns and displeasure of men, or any other carnal inducement whatever." I pray you study this promise, and compare your performance with it: and do not think that you were ensnared by thus engaging; for God's law laid an obligation on you to the whole of this duty before your engagement did it. Here is nothing but what others are bound to as well as you.

3. The neglect of discipline has a strong tendency

to delude souls, by making those think they are Christians who are not, being permitted to live in the reputation of such, and not separated from the rest by God's ordinance; it also has a tendency to make the scandalous think lightly of their sin, seeing that it is tolerated by the pastors of the church.

4. We corrupt Christianity itself in the eyes of the world, and do our part to make them believe that to be a Christian is but to be of such an opinion, to have that faith which James says the devils have, and to be solifidians; and that Christ is no more for holiness than Satan, or that the Christian religion exacts holiness no more than the false religions of the world: for if the holy and unholy are all permitted to be sheep of the same fold, without the use of Christ's means to distinguish them, we do our part to defame Christ thereby, as if he were guilty of it, and as if this were the strain of his prescripts.

5. We keep up separation, by permitting the worst to remain uncensured in our churches, so that many honest Christians think they are necessitated to withdraw.

6. By the neglect of proper discipline we do much to bring the wrath of God upon ourselves and our congregations, and thereby to blast the fruit of our labours. If the angel of the church of Thyatira was reproved for suffering seducers in the church, we may be reproved on the same ground, for suffering open, scandalous, impenitent sinners.

VIII. *Faithfully discharge the great duty which you have undertaken, and which is the occasion of our meeting here to-day, in personally catechising and instructing every one in your parishes that will submit thereto.* What our undertaking is you know, you have considered it, and it is now published to the world. But what the performance will be I know not: but I have many reasons to hope well of the most, though some will always be more ready to say than to do. And because this is the chief business of the day, I must beg leave to insist the longer on it.

(1.) I shall give you some farther motives to persuade you to faithfulness in the work which you have undertaken, presupposing the former general motives which should excite us to this as well as to any other part of our duty. (2.) I shall give to the younger of my brethren a few words of advice respecting the manner in which it should be performed.

CHAPTER VI.

Reasons for this work. From the benefits—The great cause we have to expect abundandant success if it be faithfully managed. From the difficulty of this work. From the necessity of it—What cause of humiliation we have, that we have so long neglected this work—An exhortation to the faithful performance of it—With aggravations of our sin, and witnesses which will condemn the wilful neglecters of such great and plain duties as private instruction and discipline are. The objections of indolent and unfaithful ministers answered.

THE *first* reasons by which I shall persuade you to this duty are taken from the benefits of it; the *second* from the difficulty; and the *third* from the necessity, and the many obligations that are upon us for the performance of it: and to these three heads I shall reduce them all.

I. When I look forward, and consider what, through the blessing of God, this work, if well managed, is likely to produce, it makes my heart leap for joy. Truly, brethren, you have begun a most blessed work; such as your own consciences may rejoice in, your parishes rejoice in, the nation rejoice in, and children yet unborn: yea, thousands, and millions, for aught we know, may have cause to bless God for it when we have finished our course. And though it be our business here to humble ourselves for the neglect of it so long, as we have very great cause to do, yet the hopes of a blessed success are so great in me that they are ready to turn it into a day of rejoicing. I bless the Lord that I have lived to see such a day as this,

and to be present at so solemn an engagement of so many servants of Christ to such a work. I bless the Lord who has honoured you of this county to be the beginners and awakeners of the nation hereunto. It is not a controverted business, where the exasperated minds of divided men might pick quarrels with us, or malice itself be able to invent a rational reproach; nor is it a new invention, where envy might charge you as innovators, or proud boasters of any new discoveries of your own, or scorn to follow in it because you have led the way. No! it is a well known duty. It is but the more diligent and effectual management of the ministerial work; the teaching of our principles, and the feeding of babes with milk. You lead, indeed, but not in invention of novelty, but the restoration of the ancient ministerial work, and the self-denying attempt of a duty that few or none can contradict. Unless men envy you, your labours and your sufferings, or unless they envy the saving of men's souls, I know not what they can envy you for in this. The age is so quarrelsome that, where there is any matter to fasten on, we can scarcely explain a truth, or perform a duty, but one or other, if not many, will have a stone to cast at us, and will speak evil of the things which they do not understand, or which their hearts and interests are against. But here I think we have silenced malice itself, and, I hope, may do this part of God's work quietly. If they cannot endure to be told what they know not, or contradicted in what they think, or confounded by discovery of what they have said amiss, I hope they will give us leave to do that which no man can contradict, and to practise that which all are agreed in. I hope we may have their good leave, or silent patience at least, to deny the ease and pleasure of our flesh, and to set ourselves in good earnest to help men to heaven, and to propagate the knowledge of Christ with our people. And I take it for a sign of a great and necessary work, that it has such universal approbation; the commonly acknowledged truths and duties being, for the most part, of

greatest necessity and moment. It is a more noble work faithfully to practise the truths and duties that all men confess, than to make knew ones, or discover more than others have discovered. I know not why we should be ambitious of finding out new ways to heaven: to make plain, and to walk in the old way, is our work and our greatest honour.

Because the work in hand is so pregnant with great advantages to the church, I will come down to the particular benefits which we may hope for, that when you see the excellence of it you may be the more set upon it, and loath, by any negligence or failing, to destroy or frustrate it. For certainly he who has the true views of a minister will rejoice in the appearances of any farther hopes of attaining his end; and nothing can be more welcome to him than that which will farther the very business of his life: and that our present work is such I shall show you more particularly.

1. It is the most likely mean for promoting the conversion of many souls; for it has a concurrence of those great things which must farther such a work. (1.) For the matter of it: it is about the most needful things, the principles and essentials of the Christian faith. (2.) For the manner of exercise: it will be by private conference, where we may have opportunity to set all home to the heart. (3.) The common concord of ministers will do much to bow their hearts to a consent. Were it but a meeting to resolve some controverted questions, it would not have so direct a tendency to conversion. Were it but occasional, we could not handsomely fall on them so closely; but when we make it the appointed business, it will be expected, and not so strangely taken. And if most ministers had singly set upon this work, perhaps but few of the people would have submitted; and then you might have lost your chief opportunities, and those that most needed your help would have had least of it. Whereas now we may hope that, when it is a general thing, few will refuse it; and when they see that other

neighbours do it, they will be ashamed to be so singular or openly ungodly as to deny.

The work of conversion consists of two parts:—(1.) The well informing of the judgment in necessary points. (2.) The change of the will by the efficacy of this truth. Now in this work we have the most excellent advantage for both. For the informing of their understandings, it must needs be an excellent help to have the sum of all Christianity still in memory; and though bare words, not understood, will make no change, yet when the words are plain he who has the words is far more likely to know the meaning and matter than another; for what have we to make things known by, that are themselves invisible, but words and other subservient signs? Those therefore who will deride all catechisms and professions, as unprofitable forms, had better deride themselves for talking and using the form of their own words to make known their minds to others; and they may deride all God's word on the same account, which is a standing form for the guiding of preachers, and teaching all others the doctrine of eternal life. Why may not written words, that are still before their eyes, and in their memories, instruct them, as well as the transient words of a preacher? These forms, therefore, of wholesome words are so far from being unprofitable, as some fantastical persons imagine, that they are of admirable use to all.

We shall have the opportunity by personal conference to try them, how far they understand it, and also to explain it to them as we go; and to choose out and insist on those particulars which the persons that we speak to have most need to hear. So that these two conjunct, a form of words with a plain explication, may do more than either of them could do alone.

Moreover, we have the best opportunity to imprint the same truths on their hearts, when we can speak to each one's particular necessity, and say to the sinner, "Thou art the man;" plainly mention his particular case, and set home the truth with familiar importunity.

If any thing be likely to do them good it is this. They will understand a familiar speech who hear a sermon as if it were nonsense, and they have far greater help for the application of it to themselves. You will also hear their objections, and know where it is that Satan has most advantage over them, and what it is that stands up against the truth; and so may be able to show them their errors, confute their objections, and more effectually convince them. We can better drive them to a stand, and urge them to discover their resolutions, for the future, and to promise the use of means and reformation, than otherwise we could do. What need we more for this than our experience? I seldom deal with men purposely on this great business, in private, serious conference, but they go away with some seeming convictions and promises of new obedience, if not some deeper remorse and sense of their condition; and, I hope, your own experiences are the same.

O, brethren, what a blow may we give the kingdom of darkness by the faithful and skilful managing of this work! If then the saving of souls, of your neighbours' souls, of many souls, from everlasting misery, be worth your labour, up and be doing! If the increase of the true church of Christ be desirable, this work is excellent which is so likely to promote it. If you would be the fathers of many that shall be new-born to God, would see the travail of your souls with comfort, and would be able to say at last, "Here am I and the children that thou hast given me," up, then, and ply this blessed work; if it will do you good to see your holy converts among the saints in glory, praising the Lamb before his throne; if you will be glad to present them blameless and spotless to Christ; be glad then of this singular opportunity that is offered you. If you be ministers of Christ, indeed, you will long for the perfecting of his body, and the gathering in of his elect; and your hearts will be set upon it, and you will travail as in birth for them till Christ be formed in them. Then you will consider such oppor-

tunities as your harvest time, and as sunshine days in a rainy harvest, in which it is unreasonable and inexcusable to be idle. If you have any spark of Christian compassion in you, it will surely seem worth your utmost labour to save so many souls from death, and to cover so great a multitude of sins. If you are indeed co-workers with Christ, set then to his work, and neglect not the souls for whom he died. O remember when you are talking with the unconverted, that now there is an opportunity in your hands to save a soul, to rejoice the angels of heaven, and to rejoice Christ himself; and that your work is to cast out Satan out of a sinner, and to increase the family of God. What is your own hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not your saved people in the presence of Christ Jesus at his coming? Yea, doubtless, they are your glory and your joy.

2. It will be the orderly building up of those who are converted, and their establishment in the faith. It hazards the whole work, or at least hinders it, when we do it not in the order in which it must be done. How can you build if you do not first lay a good foundation; or, how can you set on the top stone while the middle parts are neglected? *Gratia non facit saltum*, any more than nature. The second order of Christian truths have such dependance upon the first, that they can never be well learned till the first are learned. This makes so many deluded novices, that are puffed up with vain conceit of knowledge while they are grossly ignorant, and itch to be preaching before they well know what it is to be Christians; because they took not the work before them, but learned some less matters, which they heard most talked of, before they learned the vital principles. This makes many labour so much in vain, and still learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth, because they would learn to read before they learn to spell, or to know their letters; and this causes so many to fall away, and to be easily shaken with every wind of temptation, because they were not well settled in the

fundamentals. It is these fundamentals that must lead men to farther truths: it is these they must build all upon. It is these that they must live upon, and that must actuate all their graces, and animate all their duties; it is these that must fortify them against particular temptations. He who knows these well, knows as much as will make him happy; he who knows not these, knows nothing; and he who knows these best, is the best and most understanding Christian. The most godly people, therefore, in your congregations will find it worth their labour to learn the very words of a catechism: and if you would safely edify them, and firmly establish them, be diligent in this work.

3. It will make our public preaching to be better understood and regarded. When you have acquainted them with the principles they will the better understand all that you say. They will perceive what you aim at when they are once acquainted with the main parts. This prepares their minds, and opens you a way to their hearts; when, without this, you may lose the most of your labour; and the more pains you take in accurate preparations, the less good you do. As you would not therefore lose your public labour, see that you be faithful in this private work.

4. You will come to be familiar with your people when you have had the opportunity of familiar conversation; and the want of this with us, who have very numerous parishes, is a great impediment to the success of our labours. By distance, and our being unacquainted with them, slanderers and deceivers have opportunity to possess them with false conceits of you, which prejudice their minds against your doctrine; and by this distance and strangeness between ministers and people abundance of mistakes are fomented. Besides that, familiarity itself tends to beget those affections which open their ears to farther teaching; and when we are familiar with them they are more encouraged to open their doubts, seek resolution, and deal freely with us. But when a minister knows not

his people, or is as strange with them as if he did not know them, it must be a great hinderance to his doing them any good.

5. By these private instructions we shall come to be the better acquainted with each person's spiritual state, and so the better know how to watch over them, and carry ourselves towards them ever after. We shall know the better how to preach to them, when we know their temper, their chief objections, and what they have most need to hear. We shall know the better wherein to be jealous of them with a pious jealousy, and what temptations to help them most against. We shall know better how to lament for them, to rejoice with them, and to pray for them to God. For as he who prays heartily for himself will know his own sores and wants, and the diseases of his own heart; so he who prays heartily for others, should know theirs as far as is meet. If a man have the charge of but sheep or cattle, he cannot so well discharge his trust, if he do not know them, and their state and qualities. So it is with the master who will well teach his scholars, and parents who will rightly educate their children; and so with ministers who properly feed the church of God.*

6. This acquaintance with our people's state will better satisfy us in the administration of the sacraments. We shall the better understand how far they

* "Ouranius is a holy priest, full of the spirit of the gospel, watching, labouring, and praying for a poor country village Every soul in it is as dear to him as himself, and he loves them all as he loves himself, because he prays for them all as often as he prays for himself. If his whole life be one continued exercise of great zeal and labour, hardly ever satisfied with any degree of care and watchfulness, it is because he has learned the great value of souls, by so often appearing before God as their intercessor for them. He goes about his parish, and visits every body in it; but visits in the same spirit of piety that he preaches to them. He visits them to encourage their virtues, to assist them with his advice and counsel, to discover their manner of life, and to know the state of their souls, that he may intercede with God for them according to their particular necessities.

"When Ouranius first entered into holy orders, he had a haughtiness in his temper, a great contempt and disregard for all foolish and unreasonable people; but he has prayed away this spirit, and

are fit or unfit. Though this give them not the state or relation of a member of that church of which we are overseers; yet because the members of the church universal, though of no particular church, may, in some cases, have a right to the ordinances of Christ in those particular churches where they come, and in some cases they have no right, we shall by this means therefore be the better informed how to deal with them, though they be no members of that particular church. And whereas many will question a minister who examines his people in order to the Lord's supper, by what authority he does it, the same work will be done this way, in a manner beyond exception. Though I doubt not but a minister may require his flock to come to him at any convenient season, to give an account of their faith and proficiency, and to receive instruction, and therefore he may do it in preparation to the sacrament; yet, because ministers have laid the stress of that examination upon the mere necessity of their being prepared for that ordinance, and not upon their common duty to see the state and proficiency of each member of their flock at all proper seasons, and upon the people's duty to submit to the guidance and instruction of the pastors at all times, they have therefore occasioned people ignorantly to quarrel against

has now the greatest tenderness of obstinate sinners, because he is always hoping that God will, sooner or later, hear those prayers that he makes for their repentance. The rudeness, ill-nature, or perverse behaviour of any of his flock, used first to betray him into impatience; but now it raises no other passion in him than a desire to be upon his knees in prayer to God for them. Thus have his prayers for others altered and amended his own heart. It would strangely delight you to see with what spirit he converses, with what tenderness he reproves, with what affection he exhorts and preaches to those for whom he first prayed to God. This devotion softens his heart, enlightens his mind, sweetens his temper, and makes every thing that comes from him instructive, amiable, and affecting. He thinks the poorest creatures in his parish good enough and great enough to deserve the humblest attendances, the kindest friendships, the tenderest offices he can show them. He presents every one of them so often before God in his prayers, that he never thinks he can esteem, reverence, and serve those enough, for whom he implores so many mercies from God."—*Law's Serious Call to a Holy Life.*

their examinations, and to call for the proof. Whereas it is an easy thing to prove that any scholar in Christ's school is bound at any time to be accountable to his teachers, and to obey them in all lawful things, in order to their own edification and salvation; though it may be more difficult to prove a necessity that a minister must so examine them in order to the Lord's supper, any more than in order to a day of thanksgiving, or the Lord's day, or the baptizing of their children. Now by this course we shall discern their fitness in an unquestionable way.

7. It will inform men better of the true nature of the ministerial office, and awaken them to a more serious consideration of it than is now usual. It is now too common for men to think that the work of the ministry is nothing but to preach well, to baptize, administer the Lord's supper, and visit the sick. On this account, the people will submit to no more; and too many ministers are negligently or wilfully such strangers to their own calling, that they will do no more. It has often grieved my heart to observe how little some eminent and able preachers do for the saving of souls, except in the pulpit; and to how little purpose much of their labour is in consequence of this neglect. They have hundreds of people to whom they never spoke a word personally for their salvation; and if we may judge by their practice, they do not think it their duty: and the principal thing that hardens men in this oversight, is the common neglect of the private part of the work by others. There are so few who do much in it, and the omission is grown so common among pious and able men, that they have abated the disgrace of it by their parts; so that a man may now be guilty of it, without any common observance or dishonour. Never does sin so reign in a church or state as when it has gained reputation, or at least is no disgrace to the sinner, nor a matter of any offence to beholders. But I make no doubt, through the mercy of God, but the restored practice of personal oversight will convince many ministers that this is as truly their

work as that which they now do, and will awaken them to see that the ministry is another kind of business than too many excellent preachers take it to be.

Brethren, do but set yourselves closely to this work, and follow on diligently; and though you do it silently, without any words to those who are negligent, I am in hope that most of you here may live to see the day that the neglect of private personal oversight of all the flock shall be taken for a scandalous and odious omission, and shall be as disgraceful to them who are guilty of it as preaching but once a day was heretofore. A schoolmaster must not only read a common lecture, but take a personal account of his scholars, or else he is likely to do little good. If physicians were only to read a public lecture on physic, their patients would not be much the better for them; nor would a lawyer secure your estate by reading a lecture on law. The charge of a pastor requires personal dealings as well as any of these. Let us show the world this by our practice; for most men are grown regardless of bare words.

8. It will help our people to understand better the nature of their duty towards their overseers, and consequently to discharge it better. This were no matter if it were only for our sakes; but their own salvation is very much concerned in it. I am confident, by sad experience, that it is none of the least impediments to their happiness, and to a true and more general reformation of the church, that the people do not understand the work and power of ministers, nor their own duty towards them. They commonly think that a minister has no more to do with them but to preach to them, visit them in sickness, and administer sacraments; and if they hear him, and receive the sacrament from him, they owe no farther obedience, nor can he require any more at their hands. Little do they know that the minister is in the church, as the schoolmaster in his school, to teach and take an account of every one in particular, and that all Christians must be disciples or scholars in some such

school. They do not think that a minister is in the church as a physician in the town, for all people to resort to for personal advice for the curing of all those diseases that are fit to be brought to a physician; and that the priest's lips must preserve knowledge, and the people must ask the law at his mouth, because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts: and that every soul in the congregation is bound, for their own safety, to have personal recourse to him, for the resolving of their doubts, for help against their sins, for direction in duty, and for increase of knowledge and all saving grace; and that ministers are purposely settled in congregations to this end, to be still ready to advise and help the flock. If our people did but know their duty, they would readily come to us to be instructed when they are desired, and to give an account of their knowledge, faith, and lives; yea, they would come themselves, without sending for, and knock more frequently at our doors, and call for advice and help for their souls, and ask, "What shall we do to be saved?" Whereas now the matter is come to such a pass, that they think a minister has nothing to do with them; and if he admonish them, they will bid him look to himself—he shall not answer for them. If he call them to be catechised or instructed, to prepare for the Lord's supper or other holy ordinances, or would take an account of their faith and profiting, they will ask him by what authority he does these things; and think he is a busy, pragmatical fellow, who loves to be meddling where he has nothing to do; or a proud fellow, who would bear rule over their consciences. When they might as well ask him by what authority he preaches, prays for them, or gives them the sacrament. Or they might as well ask a schoolmaster by what authority he calls his scholars to learn to say their lesson, or a physician by what authority he enjoins them to take his medicines. People do not consider that all our authority is for our work, even a power to our duty, and our work is for them; so that it is but an autho-

rity to do them good. Hence they talk no wiser than if they were to quarrel with a man for helping to quench the fire in their thatch, and ask him by what authority he did it: or that would give his money to relieve the poor, and they should ask him, by what authority do you require us to take this money; or that had offered his hand to one that had fallen to help him up, or to one in the water to save him from drowning, and he should ask by what authority he did so. Truly we often have no wiser nor more thankful dealing from these men; and yet we are doubly obliged, both by Christian charity and the ministerial office, to do them all the good we can. I know not of any simile that more aptly expresses the ministerial power and duty, and the people's duty to their ministers, than these two conjunct: viz., a physician in a hospital, who has taken the charge of it, and a schoolmaster in his school, especially such as the philosophers, or teachers of any science or art, whose schools have the aged and voluntary members as well as children. Such are ministers in the church: such is their work, their authority to do it, and the duty of the people to submit thereto, allowing such differences as the subject requires.

What is it that has brought people to this ignorance of their duty but custom? It is long of us, brethren, to speak truly and plainly, it is long of us who have not used them nor ourselves to any more than common public work. We see how much custom does with people. Where it is the custom, they stick not among the papists at confessing all their sins to the priest; and because it is not the custom among us, they disdain to be privately questioned, catechised, or instructed at all. They wonder at it as a strange thing, and say, "Such things were never done before." And if we can but prevail to make this duty become as usual as other duties, they will much more easily submit to it than now. What a happy thing would it be if you should live to see the day that it will be as common for people of all ages to come in course to their teach-

ers for personal advice and help for their salvation as it is now for them to come to the church, or to send their children thither to be catechised. Our diligence in this work is the way to promote this.

9. Our practice will give the governors of the nation some better information about the nature and burden of the ministry, and so may procure their farther assistance. It is a lamentable impediment to the reformation of the church, and saving of souls, that in most populous congregations there is but one or two men to oversee many thousand souls; and so there are not labourers in any measure answerable to the work. Hence it becomes an impossible thing to them to do any considerable part of that personal duty which should be done by faithful pastors to all the flock. I have often said it, and still must say it, that this is a great part of England's misery, and great degree of spiritual famine which reigns in most cities and great towns through the land, even where they are insensible of it, and think themselves well provided. Alas, we see multitudes of carnal, ignorant sinners around about us! Here is a family, and there a family, and there almost a whole street or village of them. Our hearts pity them—we see that their necessities cry aloud for our speedy and diligent relief, so that he who has ears to hear must needs hear it: and if we would ever so gladly, we cannot help them; not only through their obstinacy, but also through our want of opportunity. We have experience, that if we could but have leisure to speak to them, and plainly to open to them their sin and danger, there were great hopes of doing good to many of those who receive little by our public teaching. But we cannot come at them: more necessary work prohibits us. We cannot do both at once: and the public must be preferred, because there we deal with many at once: and it is as much as we are able to do to perform the public work, or some little more. If we take the time when we should eat or sleep, besides the ruining of weakened bodies by it, we shall not be able after all to speak to

one of very many of them. So that we stand by and see poor people perish, and can but be sorry for them, not being able so much as to speak to them, to endeavour their recovery. Is not this a sad case in a nation that glories in the fulness of the gospel? An infidel will say, No: but methinks no man who believes everlasting joy or torment will say so. I will instance of my own case: We are together two ministers, and a third at a chapel, willing to bestow every hour of our time in Christ's work. Before we undertook this work that we are now upon, our hands were full; and now we are engaged to set apart two days every week from morning to night for private catechising and instruction: so that any man may see that we must leave undone all that other work which we were wont to do at that time; and we are necessitated to run upon the public work of preaching with small preparation; and so must deliver the message of God in such a raw, confused manner, and in a way unsuitable to its dignity and the necessity of men's souls, that it is a great trouble to our minds to consider it, and a greater trouble to us when we are doing it. Yet it must be so: there is no remedy. Unless we omit this personal instruction, we must needs run thus unprepared into the pulpit; and to omit this we dare not, it is so great and necessary a work. When we have incurred all the fore-mentioned inconveniences, and have set two whole days every week apart for the work that we have now undertaken, it will be as much as we shall be able to do to go over the parish but once in a year, there being in it about eight hundred families; and, what is worse than that, we shall be forced to cut it short, and do it less effectually than we ought, having above fifteen families to visit in a week; and alas, how small a matter it is to speak to a man once only in a year, and that so cursorily as we must be forced to do, in comparison of what their necessities require! Yet are we in hope of some fruit of this much; but how much more might it be, if we could but speak to them once a quarter, and do the work more fully and de-

liberately, as you who are in smaller parishes may do. Many ministers in England have ten times, if not more, the number of parishioners that I have; so that if they should undertake the work as we have done they can go over their parish but once in ten years. Thus, while we are hoping for opportunities to speak to them, we hear of one dying after another; and, to the grief of our souls, are forced to go with them to their graves before we could ever speak a word to them personally to prepare them for their change. What is the cause of all this misery? Why, our rulers have not seen a necessity of any more ministers than one or two in such parishes; and so they have not allowed any maintenance to that end. It is easy to separate from the multitude, gather distinct churches, and let the rest sink or swim; or, at least, if they be not saved by public preaching, let them be damned; but whether this be the most charitable and Christian course, one would think can be no hard question. What is the cause that wise and godly rulers should be thus guilty of our misery, and that none of our cries will awaken them to compassion? What, are they so ignorant as not to know these things? Are they grown cruel to the souls of men; or are they false-hearted to the interest of Christ, and have a design to undermine his kingdom? No: I hope it is none of these; but for aught I can find, it is long of us, even us ministers of the gospel, whom they should thus maintain. For those ministers who have small parishes, and might do all this private part of the work, yet do it not, except a very few, and will not do it: and those in great towns and cities who might do somewhat, though they cannot do all, will do just nothing but what accidentally falls in their way, or next to nothing; so that magistrates are not awakened to observe and consider the weight of our work. If it be not in their eyes, as well as in their ears, they will not regard it. Or if they apprehend the usefulness of it, yet if they see that ministers are so careless and lazy that they will not do it, they think it in vain to provide them a

maintenance for it—it would be but to cherish idle drones: and so they think that if they maintain ministers enough to preach in the pulpit, they have done their part; and thus are they involved in heinous sin, of which we are the occasion. Whereas if we do but heartily all set ourselves to this work, and show the magistrates that it is a most weighty and necessary part of our business; that we would do it thoroughly if we could; and that, if there were hands enough at it, the work would go on; and withal, when they shall see the happy success of our labours, then no doubt, if the fear of God be in them, and they have any love to his truth and men's souls, they will put to their helping hand, and not let men perish because there is no man to speak to them to prevent it. They will one way or other raise maintenance in such populous places for labourers proportioned to the number of souls and greatness of the work. Let them but see us fall to the work, and see it prosper in our hands; as, if it be well managed, through God's blessing, there is no doubt but it will, and then it will draw out their hearts to the promoting of it: and instead of laying parishes together, to diminish the number of teachers, they will either divide them, or allow more teachers to a parish. But when they see that many carnal ministers make a greater stir to have more maintenance to themselves, than to have more help in the work of God, they are tempted by such worldlings to wrong the church, that particular ministers may have ease and fulness.

10. It may exceedingly facilitate the ministerial service to the next generation, and prevent the rebellion of people against their teachers. Custom sways with the multitude; and those who first break a destructive custom must bear the brunt of their indignation. Somebody must do this. If we do it not, it will lie upon our successors; and how can we expect that they should be more hardy, resolute, and faithful, than we? We have seen the heavy judgments of the Lord, and heard him pleading by fire and sword with

the land. We have been ourselves in the furnace, and should be the most refined. We are most deeply obliged by oaths and covenants, by wonderful deliverances, experiences, and mercies of all sorts; and if we yet flinch, turn our backs, and prove false-hearted, why should we expect better from those who have not been driven by such scourges, nor drawn by such cords. But if they do prove better than we, and will do it, the same odium and opposition must befall them which we avoid, and that with some increase, because of our neglect; for the people will tell them that we, their predecessors, did no such things. But if we would now break through who are set in the front, and break the ice for those who follow us, their souls will bless us, our names shall be dear to them, and they will feel the happy fruits of our labour every week and day of their ministry. When the people shall willingly submit to their private instructions and examinations, yea, and to discipline too, because we have acquainted them with it, removed the prejudice, and broke the evil custom that those who went before us had been the cause of; and so we may do much to the saving of many thousand souls in all ages to come, as well as in the present age.

11. We shall keep our people's minds and time from much of that vanity that now possesses them. When men are at work, almost all their talk is vanity, the children also learn foolish and ribald songs and tales: with such filth and rubbish are their memories furnished, many an hour is lost, and many thousands of idle thoughts and words are they guilty of. Whereas, when they once know that catechisms must be learned, and that they must all give account, it will turn much of their thoughts and time that way.

12. It will do much for the better ordering of families, and better spending of the Lord's day. When we have once got the master of the family to undertake to examine his family every Lord's day, and hear what they can say of the catechism, it will find them the most profitable employment; whereas otherwise

many of them would be idle, or ill employed. Many masters who know but little themselves may yet be brought to do this for others.

13. It will do good to many ministers who are apt to be idle and misspend their time in unnecessary discourse, business, journeys or recreations; and will let them see that they have no time to spare for such things. When they are engaged in so much pressing employment of such a high nature, it will be the best cure for all their idleness or loss of time; and withal it will cut off that scandal which is consequent thereon. The people say, "Such a minister can set in an alehouse or tavern, or spend his time at bowls or other sports, or vain discourse, and why may not we do so?" Let us all set closely to this part of our work, and then see what time we can find to spare; yea, let us only faithfully employ ourselves in it, and live an idle, worldly, or voluptuous life, if we can.

14. Many personal benefits to ourselves are consequent on these. It will do much to exercise and increase our own graces; to subdue our own corruptions; and, besides our safety, it will breed much peace to our own consciences, and comfort us when our time and actions must be reviewed. (1.) To be much in provoking others to repentance and heavenly mindedness may do much to excite them in ourselves. (2.) To cry down the sin of others, engage them against it, and direct them to overcome it, will do much to shame us out of our own; and conscience will scarcely suffer us to live in that we make so much ado to draw others from. That very constant employment for God, and busying our minds and tongues against sin, and for Christ and holiness, will do much to habituate us, and to overcome our fleshly inclinations, both by direct mortification and by diversion, leaving our fancies no room nor time for their old employment. I dare say that all the austerities of monks and hermits, who addict themselves to unprofitable solitude, and are the true imitators of the unprofitable servant who hid his talent because his master was an

austere man, and think to save themselves by neglecting to show compassion on others, will not do near so much in the true work of mortification as this fruitful diligence for Christ.

15. By this means we shall take off ourselves and our people from vain controversies, and from employing our care and zeal upon the lesser matters of religion, things which often hinder their spiritual edification: for while we are taken up in teaching, and they in learning the fundamentals, our minds and tongues too will be diverted from lower things; and thus it will cure much wrangling and contention between ministers and people; for we do that which we need not and should not, because we will not fall closely to do that which we need and should. If we could contrive to get some of the most understanding and judicious of our people to assist us in privately helping others, it would be the most effectual way to prevent their running into preaching distempers or schisms; for this employment would take them up, and content the teaching humour to which they are inclined; and it might make their parts more useful in a safe and lawful way.

16. The very diligent practice of this work that we are upon will do much to set men right about many controversies that now trouble the church, and so to put an end to our differences. Especially, most of those about the ministry, churches, and discipline, would receive more convincing light by practice than by all our idle talking or writing. We have fallen of late into parties, and troubled the church about many controversies concerning excommunication, in such and such cases, which perhaps never will fall out; or if they do, they never can be so well decided by any man who is not engaged in the practice. It is like the profession of a physician, a soldier, or a pilot, who can never be worth a straw at their work, by all the precepts in the world, without practice and experience. This will be the only course to make,—(1.) Sound divines in the main, which bare studying will not do.

(2.) Recover us again to the primitive simplicity, to live upon the substantial, necessary things. (3.) To direct and resolve us in many of our quarrels, which can no other way be well resolved. For example: if this work had been set on foot, and it had been made visible what it is to have the oversight of souls, durst any bishops have contended for the sole oversight of two hundred, four hundred, or a thousand churches; and that the presbyters might be but their curates and informers? Durst they have striven with might and main to draw upon themselves such impossibilities, to carry such mountains on their backs, and to answer to God, as overseers and pastors of so many thousand people, whose faces they were never likely to see, much less were they ever to speak one word to them for their everlasting life? Would not each of them rather have said, "If I must be a bishop, let me be a parochial bishop, or have no more to oversee than I am capable of overseeing; and let me be such as the primitive bishops were, who had but one church, and not hundreds, to take care of; and let me not be engaged to perform impossibilities, and that on pain of damnation, and to the certain destruction of the business that I undertake." Surely these would rather have been their strivings. I do not speak this against any bishops who acknowledge the presbyters to be true pastors to rule and teach the flock, and consider themselves only the chief or presidents among the presbyters, yea, or the rulers of presbyters who are the rulers of the flock; but of those who make null the presbyter's office, and the church's government and discipline, by undertaking it alone as their sole prerogative.

Many other controversies pertaining to discipline I might instance, which will be better resolved by this course of practice, through the abundant experience it will afford, than by all the disputations or writings that have attempted it.

17. The design of this work is the reformation and salvation of all the people in our several parishes, for

we shall not leave out any man who will submit to be instructed. And though we can scarcely hope that every particular person will be reformed and saved by it, yet we have reason to hope that as the attempt is universal so the success will be more general and extensive than we have hitherto seen our other labours. Sure I am it is most like to the spirit, precept, and offers of the gospel, which require us to preach the gospel to every creature, and promise life to every man who accepts it by believing. If God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, that is, as Rector and Benefactor of the world, he has manifested himself willing to save all men, if they will themselves; then surely it becomes us to offer salvation to all men, and endeavour to bring them to the knowledge of the truth: and if Christ tasted death for every man, it is meet we should preach his death to every man. This work has a more excellent design than our accidental conferences with now and then a particular person. And I observe that in such occasional discourses men satisfy themselves to have spoken some good words, but seldom set plainly and closely to the matter, to convince men of sin, misery, and mercy, as in this work we are now more likely to do.

18. It is likely to be a work that shall spread over the whole land, and not stop with us who have now engaged in it. For though it be at present neglected, I suppose the cause is the same with our brethren as it has all this while been with us, who, by vain expectations of the magistrate's interposition, or by that inconsiderateness and laziness which we are bewailing here this day, have omitted it till now, as we have done; but especially a despair of a common submission of the people has been the hinderance. But when they shall be reminded of so clear and great a duty, and excited to the consideration of it, and see with us the feasibleness of it in a good measure, when it is done by common consent, no doubt they will universally take it up, and gladly concur with us in so

blessed a work. For they are the servants of the same God, as regardful of their flocks, as conscientious as we, as sensible of the interest of Christ, as compassionate to men's souls, and as self-denying and ready to do or suffer for such excellent ends. Seeing, therefore, they have the same spirit, rule, and Lord, I will not be so uncharitable as to doubt whether all who are godly, or the generality of them, will gladly join with us through all the land. And O what a happy thing it will be to see such a general combination for Christ —to see all England seriously called upon and importuned for Christ, and set in so fair a way for heaven! Methinks the consideration of it should make our hearts rejoice within us, to see so many faithful servants of Christ all over the land, to fall in with every particular sinner with such industrious solicitations for the saving of their souls as men who will hardly take a denial. Methinks I see all the godly ministers of England setting upon the work already, and resolving to take the opportunity, that unanimity may facilitate it; which, if they do, no doubt but God will succeed them. Is it not then a most happy undertaking that you are all setting your hands to, and desiring the assistance of Christ in this day?

19. Such is the weight and excellence of the duty that we are upon, that the chief part of the church reformation which is behind, as to means, consists in it; and it must be the chief means to answer the judgments, the mercies, the prayers, the promises, the cost, the endeavours, and blood of the nation: and without this it will not be done; the end of all these will never be well attained; a reformation to purpose will never be wrought; the church will be still low; the interest of Christ will be much neglected; and God will still have a controversy with the land, and, above all, with the ministers, who have been deepest in the guilt.

How long have we talked of reformation, how much have we said and done for it in general, and how

deeply and devoutly have we vowed it for our own parts; and after all this, how shamefully have we neglected it to this day! We carry ourselves as if we had not known or considered what that reformation was which we vowed. As carnal men will take on them to be Christians, and profess with confidence to believe in Christ, and accept of his salvation, and may contend for Christ, and fight for him; and yet for all this would have none of him, but perish for refusing him, who little dreamed that ever they had been refusers of him; and all because they understood not what his salvation is, and how it is carried on; but dream of a salvation without flesh-displeasing, and without self-denying, and renouncing the world, and parting with their sins, and without any holiness, or any great pains and labour of their own in subserviency to Christ and the Spirit; even so did too many ministers and private men talk, and write, and pray, and fight, and long for reformation; and would little have believed that man who should have presumed to tell them that for all this their very hearts were against reformation; and that those who were praying, fasting, and wading through blood for it, would never accept of it, but would themselves be the rejecters and destroyers of it. Yet so it is, and so it has too plainly proved; and whence is all this strange deceit of heart, that good men should no better know themselves? Why, the case is plain: they thought of a reformation to be given by God, but not of a reformation to be wrought on and by themselves. They considered the blessing, but never thought of the means of accomplishing it. As if they had expected that all things besides themselves should be mended without them; or that the Holy Ghost should again descend miraculously; or that every sermon should convert its thousands; or that some angel from heaven, or some Elias, should be sent to restore all things; or that the law of a parliament, and the sword of a magistrate, would have converted and constrained all, and have done the deed. Little did they think of

a reformation that must be wrought by their own diligence and unwearied labours, by earnest preaching, catechising, personal instructions, and taking heed to all the flock, whatever pains or reproaches it might cost them. They thought not that a thorough reformation must multiply their own work. We had all of us too carnal thoughts, that when we had ungodly men at our mercy all would be done, and conquering them was converting them, or such a mean as would have frightened them to heaven. But the business is far otherwise; and had we then known how a reformation must be attained, perhaps some would have been colder in the prosecution of it. And yet I know that even foreseen labours seem small matters at a distance, while we do but hear and talk of them; but when we come nearer to them, and must put our hands to the work, and put on our armour, and charge through the thickest of opposing difficulties, then are the sincerity and strength of men's hearts brought to trial, and it will appear how they purposed and promised before. Reformation is to many of us as the Messiah was to the Jews. Before he came they looked and longed for him, and boasted of him, and rejoiced in hope of him; but when he came, they hated him, would not believe that he was indeed the person; and therefore persecuted and put him to death, to the curse and confusion of the main body of their nation. "The Lord whom we seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; but who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness," Mal. iii, 1–3. And the reason was, because they expected him to come in a different manner from that in which he appeared to them. They looked for one to bring them riches and liberty; and to this day they

profess that they will never believe in any but such. So it is with too many about reformation. They hoped for a reformation that should bring them more wealth and honour with the people, and power to force men to do what they would have them; and now they see a reformation that must put them to more condescension and pains than ever they were at before, this will not go down with them. They thought to have the opposers of godliness under their feet; but now they see they must go to them with humble entreaties, and put their hands under their feet, if it would do them good; meekly beseeching even those who sometimes sought their lives; make it now their daily business to overcome them by kindness, and win them with love. O how many carnal expectations are here crossed!

Hence also it is that most men lay so great a part of reformation in their private opinions or singular ways. The Episcopal party think that the true reformation is to restore them to power; the Presbyterians, that if episcopacy and independency were put down, and classes set up, the work were chiefly done; the Independents, that if they had gathered a separated body of godly people under covenant, much of the reformation were wrought; and the Baptists think that if they could but get people to be baptized again, they had done a great matter for reformation. I am not now reproving any of these in the matter, though the last especially well deserve it, but to show that they lay far too much upon their several orders and formalities. Indeed, if we had our will in all these matters of order, and had the best form of government in the world, yet it is the painful execution, and the diligent and prudent use of means for men's conversion and edification, by able, faithful men, that must accomplish the reformation.

Brethren, I dare confidently tell you, that if you will but faithfully perform what you have agreed upon, both in this business of catechising and personal instruction, and in the matter of discipline formerly,

where we have well waived all the controverted part which has so much ascribed to it, you will do more for the true reformation, which is so desirable, and has been so long prayed and hoped for, than all the changes of forms and orders so eagerly contended for are ever likely to effect. If bishops would do this work, I would take them for reformers; and if Presbyterians will do it, I will take them for reformers; and those who neglected and hindered it, I have always taken for *deformers*. Let us see the work well done that God has made so necessary for men's conversion, preservation, restoration, and salvation, and the doers of it, whether prelates or presbyters, shall never have any opposition from me. But it is not bare canons, orders, names, and shows, that any wise man will take for the substance of reformation. It is not circumcision or uncircumcision, to be a Jew or a Gentile, bond or free, that availeth any thing, but a new creature, and faith that worketh by love. That is the reformation which best heals the ignorance, infidelity, pride, hypocrisy, worldly mindedness, and other killing sins of the land, and that most effectually brings men to faith and holiness. Not that I would have the least truth or duty undervalued, or any part of God's will to be rejected: but the kingdom of God consisteth not in every truth or duty, not in ceremonies or circumstances, not in meats or drinks; but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Dear brethren, it is you, and such as you, that, under Christ, must yet give this nation the fruit of all their prayers and pains, their cost and blood, and their heavy sufferings. All that they have been doing for the good of the church and for true reformation for so many years, was but to prepare the way for you to come in and do the work which they desired. Alas, what would they do by fire and sword, by drums and trumpets, for the converting of souls! The actions of armies and famous commanders, which seem so glorious, and make so great a noise that the world rings with them, what have they done, or what can

they do, that is worth talking of without you? In themselves considered, all their victories and great achievements are so far from being truly glorious, that they are very lamentable; and a butcher may as well glory that he has killed so many beasts, or a hangman that he has executed so many men, as they can glory in the thing considered in itself; for war is the most heavy temporal judgment: and far less cause would they have to glory if their cause and end were wrong. If their hearts, end, and cause be right, and they mean as honestly as any men in the world, yet are these great commanders but your pioneers, to cut up the thorns that stand in your way, to cast out the rubbish, and prepare you the way to build the house. Alas, they cannot with all their victories exalt the Lord Jesus in the soul of any sinner; and therefore they cannot set up his spiritual kingdom, for the hearts of men are his house and throne. If the work should stop with the end of theirs, and go no farther than they can carry it, we should be in the end but where we were in the beginning; and one generation of Christ's enemies would succeed another, and they who take down the wicked would inherit their vices, as they possess their places, and the last would be far the worst, as being deeper in the guilt, and more engaged in evil-doing. All this trouble then and stir of the nation has been to bring the work to your hands; and shall it die there? God forbid! They have opened you the door; and, at exceeding cost and sufferings, have removed many of your impediments, and put the building instruments into your hands; and will you now stand still or loiter? God forbid! Up then, brethren, and give the nation the fruit of their cost and labour. Frustrate not the long expectations of so many thousands, who have prayed in hope of a true reformation, paid in hope, ventured in hope, suffered in hope, and waited till now in hope. In the name of God, take heed that you do not disappoint all these hopes! Have they spent so long time in fencing the vineyard, in weeding and pruning it, and

making it ready for your hands; and will you now fail those who are sent to gather in the vintage, and be the cause of their losing all their labours? When they have ploughed the field, will you sow it only by halves? If they had known before hand that ministers would have proved idle and unfaithful, how many hundreds would have spared their blood; how many thousands would have set still, and have let the old readers and formalists alone, and have said, "If we must have dull and unprofitable men, it is as good to have one as another: it is not worth so much cost and pains to change one careless minister for another." The end is the mover and life of the agent in all the means. How many thousands have prayed, and paid, and suffered; and more in expectation of a great advantage to the church, and more common illumination and reformation of the nation by your means; and will you now deceive them all? Again I say, God forbid! It is at your hands that they are now expecting the happy issue of all. The eyes of the nation are, or should be, all, under God, upon you, for the bringing in the harvest of their cost and labours. I profess it makes me wonder at the fearful deceitfulness of the heart of man, to see how every man can call on others for duty, or censure them for omitting it; and what excellent judges we are in other men's cases, and how partial in our own.

Brethren, it were a strange mistake, if any of us should think that the price of the nation's wealth and blood was to settle us in good benefices. Was this the reformation intended, that we might live in greater ease and fulness? Why, sirs, what are we more than other men, that the people should do all this; that they should empoverish the whole nation almost to provide us a livelihood? What can they see in our persons or countenances for which they should so dote upon us? Are we not men, frail and corruptible flesh, and unworthy sinners like themselves? Surely it was for our work, and the end of our work, and not for our persons, that they have done all

this. What say you now, brethren? Will you deal faithfully with your creditors, and pay the nation the debt which you owe them? Shall all the blood and cost of this people be frustrated or not? You are now called upon to give your answer, and it is you that must give it. The work is now before you; and in these personal instructions of all the flock, as well as in public preaching, does it consist. Others have done their part, and borne their burden, and now comes in yours. You may easily see how great a matter lies upon your hands, how many will be wronged by your failing, and how much will be lost by the sparing of your labour. If your labour be more worth than all our treasures, hazards, and lives, —more worth than the souls of men and the blood of Christ; then sit still, and look not after the ignorant or the ungodly; follow your pleasure and worldly business, or take your ease; displease not sinners, nor your own flesh; but let your neighbours sink or swim; and if public preaching will not save them, let them perish. But if the case be far otherwise, you had best look about you. I shall say more of this by-and-by.

II. Having given you the first sort of reasons, which were drawn from the benefits of the present work, I come to the *second* sort, which are taken from the *difficulties;* which, if they were alone, or in a needless business, I confess might be rather discouragements than motives: but taking these with those that go before and follow, the case is otherwise; for difficulties must excite to greater diligence in a necessary and important work.

We shall find many difficulties both in ourselves and in our people; which, because they are things so obvious that your experience will leave no room for doubt, I shall pass them over in a few words.

1. In ourselves there is much dulness and laziness, so that there will be much ado to get us to be faithful in the work. Like a sluggard in bed, who knows he should rise, and yet delays, and would stay as long

as he can; so do we by duties that our corrupt nature is against, and puts us to the use of all our powers. Mere sloth ties the hands of many.

2. We have a base, man-pleasing temper, which makes us let men perish rather than lose their love; and let them go quietly to hell, lest we should make them angry with us for seeking their salvation. We are ready to venture on the displeasure of God, and suffer our people to run into everlasting misery, rather than get ill-will to ourselves. This disposition must be diligently resisted.

3. Some of us have a foolish bashfulness, which makes us very backward to begin with them, and to speak plainly to them. We are so modest that we blush to speak for Christ, to contradict the devil, or to save a soul, when of shameful works we are less ashamed.

4. Our worldly interests often stop our mouths and make us unfaithful in the work of Christ. We are afraid lest we bring trouble upon ourselves, or set people against us, and such like. All these require diligence for their resistance.

5. The greatest hinderance of all is, that we are weak in faith; so that when we should set upon a man for his conversion with all our might, if there be not the stirrings of unbelief within us, to raise up actual questionings of heaven and hell, whether the things that we should earnestly press be true; yet at least the belief of them is weak, and do not excite in us fervent, resolute, and constant zeal. Thus our whole motion is weak, because our faith, the spring of it, is weak. O what need, therefore, have all ministers for themselves and their work to look well to their faith, especially that their assent to the truth of Scripture, about the joy and torments of the life to come, be deep and lively.

6. We are unskilful in the work. Alas, how few know how to deal with men for their salvation! To get within them, and win them, and suit all our speeches to their several conditions and tempers; to choose the

fittest subjects, and follow them with a holy mixture of seriousness, terror, love, meekness, and evangelical allurements. O who is fit for these things! I profess, it seems to me as hard a matter to converse aright with such, as to preach such sermons as we usually do, if not much more so. All these difficulties in ourselves should awaken us to resolution, preparation, and diligence, that we be not overcome by them, and hindered in our work.

In our people we have also many difficulties to grapple with.

1. Many of them will be unwilling to be taught, and refuse to come near us, as being too good to be catechised, or too old to learn, unless we deal wisely with them in public and private, and, by the force of reason and the power of love, conquer their perverseness, which we must carefully endeavour.

2. Many who are willing, are extremely dull, and therefore will keep away, for fear of showing their dulness, unless we tenderly and diligently encourage them.

3. When they do come, so great is their ignorance that you will find it a hard matter to get them to understand you. Hence, if you have not the art of making every thing plain, you will leave them as strange to it as before.

4. You will find it still harder to fix things on their hearts, and set them home to the quick, so as to produce that saving change which is our end, and without which our labour is lost. O what a rock is a hardened, carnal heart! How stiffly will it resist the most powerful persuasions, and hear of everlasting life or death as a thing of naught. If you have not, therefore, great seriousness, fervency, and fitness of expression, what good can you expect? And when all is done, the Spirit o grace must do the work; but as God and man choose instruments most suitable to the nature of the agent, work, or end, so here the spirit of wisdom, life, and holiness does not usually work by foolish, dead, or worldly instruments; but by

such persuasions of light, life, and purity, as are most like himself and the work that is to be wrought thereby.

5. When you have made some impressions on their hearts, if you look not after them, they will soon return to their former hardness, and their old companions and temptations will render all abortive. All the difficulties of the work of conversion with which we usually acquaint our people are before us in our present work, which, however, I shall not enumerate.

III. The *third* sort of reasons are drawn from the *necessity* of the work: for if it were not necessary, the lazy might be discouraged rather than excited by the forementioned difficulties.

In the first place, it is necessary by obligation, *ut officium, necessitate, præcepti:* in the second, it is necessary *ad finem;* and that for God, for our neighbours, and ourselves.

(1.) We have on us the obligation of Scripture precepts, both general and special. (2.) The subservient obligation, by promises and threatenings. (3.) These are seconded by executions of actual judgments and mercies. (4.) We have the obligation of our own undertaking upon us. All these deserve your consideration.

1. Every Christian is obliged to do all that he can for the salvation of others; but every minister is doubly obliged, because he is separated to the gospel of Christ for that end, and is to give himself up wholly to that work. It is needless to question our obligation, when we know that this work is needful for the conversion and salvation of our people, and that we are commanded to do all that is needful for that end, as far as we are able. Even old professors have need to be taught the first principles of God's oracles, if they have neglected or forgot them. That the unconverted have need of conversion, and the means of it, is not doubted among us; and whether the work of personal instruction be not a needful means, experience will put us out of doubt. Let those who have taken most pains in public examine their people, and try whether many of them be not yet as

ignorant and careless almost as if they had never heard the gospel. For my part, I study to speak as plainly and affectingly as I can: next my study to speak truth, this is my chief study, and yet I frequently meet with those who have been my hearers eight or ten years, who know not whether Christ be God or man, and wonder when I tell them the history of his birth, life, and death, as if they had never heard it before; and of those who know the history of the gospel, how few are there who know the nature of that repentance, faith, and holiness which it requires; but most of them have an ungrounded affiance in Christ, trusting that he will justify and save them while the world has their hearts, and they live to themselves; and this affiance they take for justifying faith. I have found by experience that these have got more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half an hour's close discourse, than they did from ten years' public preaching. I know that the public preaching of the gospel is the most excellent means, because we speak to many at once; but otherwise, it is usually far more effectual to preach it privately to a particular sinner; for the plainest man can scarcely speak plain enough in public for them to understand, but we may in private. In public our discourses are long, and we quite overrun their understandings and memories; they are confounded and at a loss, and not able to follow us, and one thing drives out another. But in private we can take our work *gradatim*, and take our hearers with us as we go; and by questions and their answers can see how far they go with us, and what we have next to do. I conclude, therefore, that public preaching will not be sufficient: for though it may be an effectual means to convert many, yet not so many as may justly be expected from a diligent and faithful use of all the other means which God has appointed for that end. You may long study and preach to little purpose, if you neglect this duty of private and personal instruction.

For instances of particular and special obligation,

we might easily show you many, both from Christ's own example, who used this interlocutory dialogue way of preaching both to his disciples and the Jews, and from the example of the apostles. Thus Peter preached to the Jews, and to Cornelius and his friends; thus Philip preached to the eunuch, and thus Paul preached to the jailer and many others. It is plain that it was the most common manner of preaching in those times.

2. There is a necessity also for this duty *ad finem.*

(1.) For bringing greater glory to God, by the more full and extensive success of the gospel, because he is most honoured and pleased when most are saved; for he has sworn that he has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he return and live. And, doubtless, as every Christian lives to the glory of God as his end, so he will gladly take that course which will most effectually promote it? for what man would not attain his end? O, brethren, if we could set this work on foot in all the parishes in England, and get our people to submit to it, and then prosecute it skilfully and zealously ourselves, what a glory would it put upon the face of the nation, and what glory would redound to God thereby! If our common ignorance were thus banished, our vanity and idleness turned into the study of the way of life, and every shop and every house were busy in learning catechisms, and speaking of the word and works of God, what pleasure would God take in our cities and countries! He would even dwell in our habitations, and make them his delight. It is the glory of Christ which shines in his saints, and all their glory is his glory; that, therefore, which honours them, in number or excellence, honours him. Will not the glory of Christ be most wonderful and conspicuous in the New Jerusalem, when the church shall have that shining lustre which is described in Rev. xxi? It is he who is the sun and shield of his church, and his light is it in which they shall have light; and the business of every saint is to glorify him. If therefore we can increase the num-

ber or strength of the saints, we thereby increase the honour of the King of saints; for he will have service and praise where before he had disobedience and dishonour. Christ also will be honoured in the fruits of his bloodshed, and the Spirit of grace in the fruit of his operations; and do not all these ends require us to use the means with diligence?

(2.) This duty also is necessary to the welfare of our people. How much it will tend to their salvation is manifest. Brethren, can you look on your miserable neighbours, and not perceive them calling for your help? There is not a sinner whose case you should not so far compassionate as to be willing to relieve him at a dearer rate than this. Can you see them as the wounded man by the way, and unmercifully pass by? Can you hear them cry to you as the man of Macedonia to Paul in his vision, Come and help us, and yet will you refuse your help? Are you intrusted with an hospital, where one languishes in one corner, and another groans in another, and cries out, "O help me, pity me for the Lord's sake;" and a third is raging mad, and would destroy himself and you; and yet will you sit idle? If it may be said of him who does not relieve men's bodies, how much more of those who relieve not their souls! "If you see your brother have need, and shut up the bowels of your compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in you?" You are not such hard-hearted men but you will pity a leper—you will pity the naked, imprisoned, or desolate—you will pity him who is tormented with grievous pain or sickness; and will you not pity an ignorant, hard-hearted sinner? Will you not pity one who must be shut out from the presence of the Lord, and lie eternally under his wrath, if thorough and speedy repentance prevent it not? O what a heart it is which does not pity such a one! What shall I call the heart of such a man? A heart of stone, or adamant—the heart of a tiger, or rather the heart of an *infidel;* for surely if he believed the misery of the impenitent, it is not possible but he

should have pity on him! Can you tell men in the pulpit that they shall certainly be damned except they repent, and yet have no pity on them when you have proclaimed their danger; and if you pity them, will you not do this much for their salvation? What multitudes around about you are blindly hastening to perdition; and your voice is appointed to be the means of reclaiming them!

Brethren, what if you heard sinners cry after you in the streets, "O, sirs, have pity on me, and afford me your advice—I am afraid of the everlasting wrath of God—I know I must shortly leave this world, and I am afraid lest I shall be miserable in the next!" Could you deny your help to such a sinner? What if they came to your study door, and cried for help, and would not go away till you had told them how to escape the wrath of God; could you find in your hearts to drive them away without advice? I am confident you could not. Alas, such persons are less miserable than those who cannot cry for help! It is the hardened sinner, that cares not for your help, who most needs it; and he who has not so much life as to feel that he is dead, nor so much light as to see his danger, or so much sense left as to pity himself—this is the man that is most to be pitied. Look upon your neighbours around about you, and think what numbers need your help in no less a case than the apparent danger of damnation. All the impenitent you see around you, suppose that you hear them cry to you, "If ever you pitied poor wretches, pity us, lest we should be tormented in the flames of hell; if you have the hearts of men, pity us!" Do that for them which you would do if they followed you with such complaints. O how can you walk, and talk, and be merry with such people, when you know their case! Methinks when you look them in the face, and think how they must lie in perpetual misery, you should break forth into tears, as the prophet did when he looked upon Hazael, and then begin with the most importunate exhortations. When you must visit them in their sickness,

will it not wound your hearts to see them ready to depart into misery, before you have ever dealt seriously with them for their salvation? O then, for the Lord's sake, and for the sake of poor souls, have pity on them, bestir yourselves, and spare no pains that may be conducive to their salvation.

(3.) I must farther tell you that this ministerial fidelity is necessary to your own welfare as well as to that of your people; for this is your work, according to which you shall be judged. You can no more be saved without ministerial diligence and fidelity, than they or you can be saved without Christian diligence and fidelity. If you care not for others, at least care for yourselves. O what is it to answer for the neglect of such a charge; and what sin is more heinous than the betraying of souls? Does not this threatening make you tremble? "If thou warn not the wicked, their blood will I require at thy hands." I am afraid, nay, I am past doubt, that the day is near, when unfaithful ministers will wish they had never known their charge; but that they had rather been colliers, tinkers, or sweepers of channels, than pastors of Christ's flock—when, besides all the rest of their sins, they shall have the blood of so many souls to answer for.

O, brethren, our death, as well as that of our people, is at hand; and it is as terrible to an unfaithful pastor as to any! When we see that die we must, and there is no remedy, no wit or learning, no credit or popular applause can put by the stroke or delay the time; but, willing or unwilling, our souls must go, and that into a world which we never saw, where our persons and worldly interests will not be respected. O then for a clear conscience, that can say, "I lived not to myself, but to Christ; I spared no pains; I hid not my talent; I concealed not men's misery, nor the way of their recovery." O, sirs, let us therefore take time while we may have it, and work while it is day; for the night cometh when none can work. This is our day too; and by doing good to others we must do good to ourselves. If you would prepare for a

comfortable death, and a sure and great reward, the harvest is before you: gird up the loins of your minds, and quit yourselves like men, that you may end your days with that confident triumph: "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God, the righteous Judge, shall give me." And if you would be blessed with those who die in the Lord, *labour now*, that you may rest from your labours then; and do such works as you would wish should follow you, and not such as will prove your terror in the review.

Having given you the reasons for this work, I shall, before I come to the directions, (1.) Apply them, in order to humble and excite us to the work. (2.) Answer some objections.

1. What cause have we to bleed before the Lord this day, who have neglected this great and good work so long, that we have been ministers of the gospel so many years, and done so little by personal instruction, for the saving of men's souls! If we had set about this business sooner, who knows how many more might have been brought to Christ, and how much holier and happier we might have made our congregations; and why might we not have done it sooner? There were many hinderances in our way; and so there are still, and always will be: but if the greatest hinderance had not been in ourselves, in our own dulness and littleness of faith and love, much might have been done before now. We had the same God to command us, and the same miserable objects of compassion to excite us to the work. May the Lord in mercy forgive us, and lay not this or any of our ministerial negligences to our charge! O that he would cover all our unfaithfulness; and, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, wash away our guilt of the blood of souls, that when the chief Shepherd shall appear, we may stand before him in peace, and may not be condemned for scattering or neglecting his flock!

2. Now, brethren, what shall we do for the time to

come, but deny and rouse up ourselves to the business that we are engaged in. The harvest is great; the labourers are too few; the loiterers and contentious hinderers are many; the souls of men are precious; the misery of sinners is great, and the everlasting misery that they are in danger of is greater; the beauty and glory of the church are desirable; the joy that we are helping them to is inconceivable. To be coworkers with God and his Spirit, and to promote the end for which Christ shed his blood, by striving for men's salvation, is most glorious; to lead on the armies of Christ through the midst of their enemies, and conduct them safe to the land of everlasting rest, requires no small skill and diligence. The season for doing this work is more calm and favourable than most ages before us have ever seen. The present time is posting away: while we are trifling, men are dying, and passing quickly into another world. And is there nothing in all this to awaken us to our duty, and prompt us to speedy and unwearied diligence? Can a man be too careful and active under all these motives and engagements? Do we need to heap up words to persuade you to a known and most important duty? One would think it should be enough to show you a line in the book of God, to prove that it is his will, and has a tendency to men's salvation; or that the very sight of your miserable neighbours should be sufficient to draw out your most compassionate endeavours for their relief. Were there but clear and deep impressions upon our souls of those glorious things that we daily preach, what a change would it make in our sermons and in our private discourse. O what a miserable thing it is to the church, and to themselves, that men must preach of heaven and hell before they heartily believe the reality of either, or have felt the weight of the doctrines they preach! It is amazing to think what matters we preach and talk of. Together with a thousand other truths equally important and solemn, we tell our hearers that their souls must shortly be separated from their bodies, appear before

a righteous God, and enter upon unchangeable joy or torment. O with what amazing thoughts do dying men view these things! How should such matters be preached and discoursed of. O the gravity, the seriousness, the incessant diligence that these things require! I know not what others think of them; but, for my part, I am ashamed of my stupidity, and wonder at myself, that I deal not with my own and other souls as one who looks for the great day of the Lord; and that I can have room for almost any other thoughts or words, and that such astonishing matters do not wholly occupy me. I marvel how I can preach of them superficially and coldly; how I can let men alone in their sins, and that I do not go to them, and beseech them for the Lord's sake to repent, however they take it, and whatever pains or trouble it may cost me. I seldom come out of the pulpit but my conscience smites me that I have been no more serious and fervent. It accuses me not so much for want of human ornaments or elegancy, not for letting fall an uncouth word; but it asks me, "How couldst thou speak of life and death with such a heart? How couldst thou preach of heaven and hell in such a careless, sleepy manner? Dost thou believe what thou hast said? Art thou in earnest or in jest? How canst thou tell people that sin is such a thing, and that so much misery is upon them, and before them, and be no more affected with it? Shouldst thou not weep over such a people, and should not thy tears interrupt thy words; shouldst not thou cry aloud, and show them their transgressions, and entreat and beseech them as for life and death?" Truly this is the peal that conscience rings in my ears, and yet my drowsy soul is not fully awakened. O what a thing is a senseless, hardened heart! O Lord, save us from the plague of infidelity ourselves, or else how shall we be fit instruments of saving others from it? I am even confounded to think what a difference there is between my views in sickness and my pulpit discourses and conversation in health, concerning the

life to come: that that can appear so light to me now which was then so solemn and affecting, and which I know will be so again when death looks me in the face.

O brethren, surely, if you had all conversed with death as often as I have done, and as often received the sentence in yourselves, you would have an unquiet conscience, without a reformed life in your ministerial diligence and fidelity; and you would have something within you that would frequently ask you such questions as these: "Is this all thy compassion for lost sinners; wilt thou do no more to seek and to save them! Is there not such and such a one? O how many around about thee who are yet the visible sons of death! What hast thou said to them, or done for their recovery? Shall they die and be in hell before thou wilt speak one serious word to them to prevent it? Shall they there curse thee for ever that didst no more in time to save them?" Such cries of conscience are daily in my ears, though the Lord knows I have too little obeyed them. The God of mercy pardon me, and awake me with the rest of his servants who have been thus sinfully negligent! I confess to my shame that I seldom hear the bell toll for one that is dead, but conscience asks me, "What hast thou done for the saving of that soul before it left the body? There is one more gone to judgment. What didst thou to prepare that immortal spirit for judgment?" And yet I have been slothful and backward to help those who survive. How can you refrain, when laying a corpse in the grave, from thinking, "Here lies the body, but where is the soul, and what have I done for it before it departed? It was part of my charge—what account can I give of it?" O sirs, is it a small matter to answer such questions as these? It may seem so now, but the hour is coming when it will not. If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and will condemn us much more, with another kind of condemnation than conscience does. The voice of conscience now is a still voice,

and the sentence of conscience is a gentle sentence, in comparison of the voice and the sentence of God. Alas, conscience sees but very little of our sin and misery, in comparison of what God sees! What mountains would these things appear to your souls, which now seem mole hills; and what beams would these be in your eyes, though now but as motes, if you saw them as you ought: I dare not say, as God sees them. "Wherefore we receiving (and preaching) a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii, ult.

That you may not say I frighten myself or you without cause, and tell you of dangers and terrors when there are none, I will here add the certainty of that condemnation which is likely to befall negligent pastors, and particularly that will befall us, if we shall hereafter be wilful neglecters of this great work. Many will rise up against us and condemn us.

(1.) Our parents, who destined us to the ministry, will condemn us, and say, "Lord, we devoted them to thy service, and they made light of it, and served themselves."

(2.) Our masters who taught us, our tutors who instructed us, the schools and universities that we lived in, and all the years we spent in study, will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us. What was all this for, but the work of God?

(3.) Our learning, knowledge, and ministerial gifts will condemn us. For what end are we made partakers of these, but for the work of God?

(4.) Our voluntarily undertaking the charge of souls will condemn us; for men should be true to the trust they undertake.

(5.) All the care of God for his church, and all that Christ has done and suffered for them, will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us, because by our negligence we destroyed them for whom Christ died.

(6.) All the severe precepts and charges of Holy Scripture, with the promises of assistance and reward, and all the threatenings of punishment, will rise up against the unfaithful and condemn them.

(7.) The example of the prophets and apostles, and other preachers recorded in Scripture, will rise up against such and condemn them. This pattern set them by Paul, (Acts xx,) and the example of the diligent servants of Christ in these latter times, and in the places around them. These were for their imitation, to provoke them to a holy emulation in fidelity and ministerial diligence.

(8.) The Holy Bible, and all the books in our studies, which tell us of our duty, directly or indirectly, will condemn lazy or unprofitable servants.

(9.) All the sermons by which we endeavour to persuade our people to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, to lay violent hands upon the crown, and take the kingdom as by force, to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and so to run as that they may obtain, will rise up against us, and condemn us; for if it concern them to labour for their salvation, does it not concern us who have the charge of them to be also violent, laborious, and unwearied, in striving to help on their salvation? Is it worth their labour and patience, and is it not also worth ours?

(10.) All the sermons by which we set before them the danger of their natural state, the evil of sin, the need of Christ and grace, the joys of heaven and the torments of hell, yea, and the truth of the Christian religion, will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us. And a dismal review it will be when we shall be forced to think, "Did I tell them of such great dangers and hopes in public, and would I do no more to help them in private? What, tell them daily of threatened damnation, and yet let them run into it! Tell them of such glory, and scarcely speak a word to them personally to help them to it! Were these such great matters with me at church, and so small when I came home?" Dreadful self-condemnation!

(11.) All the sermons that we have preached to persuade other men to these very duties; as neighbours to exhort one another daily, and plainly to rebuke them that sin; parents and masters to instruct their children and servants. All these will condemn us. For shall we persuade others to that which we will not do ourselves? When we threaten them for neglecting it, we threaten our own souls.

(12.) The maintenance we take for our service, if we be unfaithful, will condemn us: for who will pay a servant to take his pleasure, or sit still, or work for himself? If we have the fleece, it is surely that we may feed the flock. By taking the wages, we oblige ourselves to the work.

(13.) All the honour we expect or receive from the people, and all the ministerial privileges before mentioned, will condemn the unfaithful.

(14.) All the judgments that God has executed on them in this age before our eyes will condemn us, if we be unfaithful. Has he made the idle shepherds and sensual drones to stink in the nostrils of the people, and will he honour us if we be idle and sensual? Has he sequestered them, and cast them out of their habitations, and out of the pulpits, and laid them by as dead while they are alive, and made them a hissing and a by-word in the land; and yet dare we imitate them? Are not their sufferings our warnings? If any thing in the world can awaken ministers to self-denial and diligence, one would think we have seen enough to do it. If the judgments of God on one man could do so much, what should so many years' judgment on so many hundreds do? Would you have imitated the old world, if you had seen the flood that drowned them? Would you have taken up the sins of Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and idleness, if you had seen the flames of Sodom? This was God's argument to deter the Israelites from the sins of the surrounding nations: "For all these things they had seen them cast out before them." Who would have been a Judas that had seen him hang himself; or a lying, sacrilegious

hypocrite, that had seen Ananias and Sapphira struck dead? Who would not have been afraid to contradict the gospel that had seen Elymas struck blind? And shall we prove self-seeking, idle ministers, when we have seen God scourging such out of his temple, and sweeping them away in his displeasure? God forbid! For then how great and manifold will our condemnation be?

(15.) All the days of fasting and prayer that have been of late years in England for a reformation will rise up in judgment against the unreformed who will not be persuaded to this part of the work. And I confess it is so heavy an aggravation of our sin, that it makes me ready to tremble to think of it. Was there ever a nation on the face of the earth that so long and solemnly followed God with fasting and prayer as we have done? For many years we had a monthly fast, besides frequent private and public fasts; and what was all this for? The end of all our prayers was church reformation, and especially these two things: a faithful ministry, and exercise of discipline in the church. Did it then once enter into the hearts of the people, yea, or into our own hearts, to imagine, that when we had all that we wished for, and the matter was put into our own hands, to be as diligent as we could, and to exercise what discipline we pleased, that then we would do nothing but preach publicly; that we would not be at the pains to catechise and instruct our people personally, nor exercise any considerable part of discipline at all? It astonishes me to think of it. What a depth of deceit is in the heart of man!

O the earnest prayers that I have heard in secret for a faithful ministry and for discipline! They prayed as if they had wrestled for salvation itself. Yea, they commonly called discipline the kingdom of Christ, or the exercise of his kingly office in his church; and so preached and prayed for it as if the setting up of discipline had been the setting up of the kingdom of Christ; and did I then think that they would refuse to set it up when they might? What, is

the kingdom of Christ now reckoned among the things indifferent?

If the God of heaven, who knew our hearts, had, in the midst of our prayers and cries, on one of our public monthly fasts, returned us this answer with his dreadful voice, in the audience of the assembly: "You deceitful-hearted sinners, what hypocrisy is this, to weary me with your cries, for that which you will not have if I would give it you, and thus to lift up your voices for that which your souls abhor! What is reformation but the instructing and importunate persuading of sinners to entertain my Christ and grace as offered them, and the governing my church according to my word? And these, which are your work, you will not be persuaded to when you come to find it troublesome and ungrateful. When I have delivered you, it is not me, but yourselves, that you will serve; and I must be as earnest to persuade you to reform the church, in doing your own duty, as you are earnest with me to grant you liberty for reformation; and when all is done you will leave it undone." I say, if the Lord, or any messenger of his, had given us such an answer, would it not have amazed us, and seemed incredible to us that our hearts should ever be such as now they prove; and would we not have said, as Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" or, as Peter, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I?" Well, brethren, sad experience has discovered our frailty. We have denied the troublesome and costly part of the reformation that we prayed for: but Christ still turns back, and looks with a merciful eye upon us. O that we had but the hearts immediately to go out and weep bitterly, and do as we have done no more, lest a worse thing come upon us; but henceforth follow Christ through labour and suffering, though it were unto death.

(16.) All the judgments upon the nation, the cost, the labour, the blood, and the deliverances, and all the endeavours of the governors for reformation, will rise up against us, if we now refuse to be faithful

for a reformation, when it is before us, and at our will.

(17.) If we still make light of a reformation, by instructing the ignorant, or exercising Christ's discipline, many vows and promises of our own will rise up in judgment against us, and condemn us. Not to mention the national covenant, we solemnly engaged, near three years ago, that we would set up the exercise of discipline, and yet how many have neglected it to this day, without giving any good reason for it. We have now subscribed another engagement for catechising and instructing all that will submit. We have done well so far: but if we should flag, and prove remiss and superficial in the performance, our subscriptions will condemn us—this day's humiliation will condemn us. Be not deceived, God is not mocked: it is not your names only, but your hearts and hands also, that he requires. There is no dallying with God by feigned promises: he expects that you will be as good as your word. He will not hold him guiltless who by false oaths, vows, or covenants with him, takes his holy name in vain. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel that it was an error; wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?" Eccles. v, 4–6.

Thus I have showed you what will be the consequence of your not setting yourselves faithfully to this work, to which you have so many obligations and engagements; what an inexcusable thing our neglect will be, and how great and manifold a condemnation it will expose us to. Truly, brethren, if I did not apprehend the work to be of exceeding great moment to yourselves, to the people, and to the honour of God, I would not have troubled you with so many words about it, nor have presumed to have spoken so sharply

as I have done. But when it is for life and death, men are apt to forget their reverence, courtesy, and compliments. For my own part, I apprehend this is one of the best and greatest works that ever I put my hand to: and I verily think that your thoughts of it are as mine. If so, you will not think my words too many, or too keen. I can well remember the time when I was earnest for the reformation of matters of ceremony; and if I should be cold in such a substantial matter as this, how disproportionable would my zeal appear. Alas, can we think that the reformation is wrought when we have cast out a few ceremonies, changed some vestures, gestures, and forms? No; it is the converting and saving of souls that is our business. The chief part of the reformation is that which does most good, and tends most to the salvation of the people. Let others take it as they please, I will so far speak for your encouragement as to say again, I am verily persuaded, that as you are happily agreed and combined for this work, so if you faithfully execute this agreement, together with your former agreement for discipline, you will do much more for a true reformation, and that peaceably, without meddling with controverted points, than has yet been done in any part of England, though no more than is unquestionably your duty.

I shall now answer some objections.

1. Some object that "this course will take up so much time as to interfere with our studies. Most of us are young, and have need of much time to improve our own abilities, which this course prohibits us." I answer:

(1.) Those whom we persuade to this work are supposed to understand the substance of the Christian religion, and to be able to teach others; and the addition of lower and less necessary things is not to be preferred before this needful communication of the fundamentals. I highly value common knowledge, and would not encourage any to set light by it; but I value the saving of souls before it. That work

which is immediately connected with the end of all our labours must be done, whatever be undone. Get well to heaven, and help your people thither, and then you shall know in a moment a thousand times more than you can now attain by all your studies; and is not this the most expeditious and certain way to knowledge?

(2.) If you grow not extensively in knowledge you will by this way of diligent practice obtain the intensive and more excellent growth. If you know not so many things as others, you will know the great things better than they; for this serious dealing with sinners for their salvation will help you to far deeper apprehensions of their saving principles than will be got by any other means; and more of the knowledge of these is worth all the other knowledge in the world. When I am looking heavenward, gazing towards the inaccessible light, and aspiring after the knowledge of God, and find my soul so dark and distant that I am ready to say, "I know not God; he is above me; quite out of my reach:" this is the most killing and grievous ignorance. Methinks I could willingly exchange all other knowledge that I have for one glimpse more of the knowledge of God and the life to come. O that I had never known a word in logic, metaphysics, &c.; nor known what schoolmen said, so I had but one spark more of that light that would show me the things that I must shortly see. For my part, I conceive that by seriously talking of everlasting things, and teaching the creed and catechism, you may grow more in knowledge, though not in the knowledge of more things, and prove much wiser men, than if you spent that time in common or curious and less necessary things.

(3.) Yet let me add, that though I count this the chief knowledge, I wish you to have more; because those subservient sciences are very useful; and therefore I say, that you may have competent time for both, lose none upon vain recreations and employments; trifle not away a minute; consume it not in needless

sleep; do what you do with all your might, and then see whether you will not have a sufficient portion of time for gaining useful knowledge. If you set apart but two days in a week for this great work, you may find some for common studies out of all the other five.

(4.) Duties must be taken together, and the greatest preferred; but none neglected that can be performed, nor one pleaded against another, but each in its proper place. Therefore if we cannot pursue our studies, and instruct the ignorant, we must let our studies alone. I would throw by all the libraries in the world, rather than be guilty of the perdition of one soul.

2. It is objected, "But this course will destroy the health of our bodies, by allowing us no time for necessary recreations; and it will wholly lock us up from any civil and friendly intercourse with our friends for the relaxation of our minds."

Ans. (1.) This is the mere plea of the carnal mind. The sluggard saith, There is a lion in the way. He will not plough because of the cold. There is no duty of moment and self-denial, but if you consult with flesh and blood, they will give you as good reasons as these against it. Who would ever have been burned at the stake for Christ, if this reasoning had been good; yea, who would ever have been a Christian?

(2.) We may take time for necessary recreation. An hour or half an hour's walk before meals is as much recreation as is necessary for the health of the weaker sort of students. I know something of this by long experience. I have languished under great bodily weakness for many years, and have found exercise the principal means of my preservation till now; and therefore have as great reason to plead for it as any man that I know; yet I have found that the aforesaid proportion of time has been blessed to my preservation, though I know more would have tended to increase my health. I do not know one minister in a hundred who needs so much as I do. Yea, I know abundance of ministers who scarcely ever use any exercise at all, but I do not commend them for it. It is our duty to

use as much exercise as is necessary for the preservation of our health, so far at least as our work requires; otherwise we should for one day's work lose the opportunity of many. But this may be done, and yet the works which we are engaged in be done too.

As for those men who do not limit their recreation to their stated hours, but must have them merely for their pleasure, and not only to fit them for their work; such have need to study better the nature of Christianity, learn the danger of living after the flesh, and more mortification and self-denial before they preach these things to others. If you must needs have your pleasures, you should not have put yourselves into that calling that requires you to make God and his service your pleasure. Your baptismal engagement is to fight against the flesh. Much of the Christian warfare consists in the combat between the flesh and the spirit. The difference between a true Christian and a wicked man is, that one lives after the Spirit, and mortifies the deeds of the body, and the other lives after the flesh. Do you know that the overcoming the flesh is the principal part of our victory, on which the crown of life depends; and do you make it your calling to preach all this to others, and yet must you needs have your pleasures? If you must, then for shame give over preaching the gospel, and the profession of Christian self-denial, and profess yourselves to be what you are; and as you sow to the flesh, so of the flesh shall you receive the wages of corruption. Does such a one as Paul say, "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway," 1 Cor. iv, 26, 27. And have not we need to do so? Shall we pamper our bodies, and indulge ourselves in unnecessary pleasures, when Paul must keep under his body, and bring it into subjection? Must Paul do this, lest after all his preaching he should be

a cast-away; and have not we cause to fear it of ourselves much more? I know that some pleasure itself is lawful; that is, when it is of use to fit us for our work. But for a man to be so far in love with his pleasures as that he must unnecessarily waste his precious time in them, and neglect the great work of God for men's salvation, yea, and plead for this as if it might be done, and to justify himself in such a course, is wickedness inconsistent with the common fidelity of a Christian, much more with the fidelity of a teacher of the church. Such as are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God must look to be loved of him accordingly, and are more fit to be cast out of Christian communion than to be chief in the church; for we are commanded from such to turn away. The recreations of a student must be especially for the exercise of his body: in his work he has a great variety of delights for his mind; and they must be like whetting with the mower, only used so far as is necessary for his work. He must be careful that they rob him not of his precious time, and therefore must be kept within narrow bounds. Peruse Mr. Wheatley's sermon on the redemption of time.

(3.) The labour we are now engaged to perform is not likely to impair our health. It is true it must be serious; but that will only excite and revive our spirits, and not spend them. Men can talk all the day long of other matters without any abatement of their health; and why may not we talk with men about their salvation without any abatement of ours?

What have we our time and strength for but to lay both out for God? What is a candle made for but to burn? Burned and wasted we must be; and is it not more fit it should be in lighting men to heaven, and in working for God, than in living to the flesh. How little difference is there between the pleasure of a long and a short life when both are at an end? What comfort will it be at death, that you lengthened your life by shortening your work? He that works much lives much. Our life is to be esteemed according to the end

and work of it, and not according to the mere duration. As Seneca can say of a drone, *ibi jacet, non ibi vivit : et diu fuit, non diu vixit.* Will it not comfort us more at death to review a short time faithfully spent, than a long time unfaithfully ?

(4.) Visiting and civilities, if they be for greater purposes than your ministerial employments are, you may break a Sabbath for them ; you may forbear preaching, and also this private work. But if it be otherwise, how dare you make them a pretence to neglect so great a duty ? Must God wait on your friends ? What if they be lords, or knights, or gentlemen ! Must they be served before him ? Is their displeasure equal to his ? Or dare you think, when God calls you to give an account of your ways, to put him off with this excuse : "Lord, I would have spent more of my time in seeking men's salvation, but that such a gentleman and such a friend would have taken it ill if I had not waited on them." If you yet seek to please men you are no longer the servants of Christ. He who dares spend his life in self-pleasing and man-pleasing is bolder than I am ; and he who dares waste his time in compliments, little considers what he has to do with it. O that I could improve my time according to my convictions of the necessity of it ! He who has looked death in the face as often as I have done will thereby be taught to value his time. I profess I wonder at those ministers who can hunt, shoot, bowl, or use such recreations two or three hours, yea, whole days together ; who can sit an hour in vain company, and spend whole days in complimental visits and journeys. Good Lord, what do these men think on ! When so many souls are crying for their help, and they know not how short a time their people may be together ; and the smallest parish has work sufficient to employ all their diligence night and day !

Brethren, I hope you are content to be plainly dealt with. If you have no sense of the worth of souls, of the preciousness of that blood which was shed for

them, of the glory to which they are going, and of the misery they are in danger of; then are you no Christians, and therefore very unfit to be ministers; and if you have, how can you find time for needless recreations, visits, or discourses? Dare you chat and trifle away your time when you have such works as these to do, and so many of them? O precious time, how swiftly does it pass away, how soon will it be gone! What are the forty years of my life that are past! Were every day as long as a month, methinks it were too short for the work of a day. Have we not lost enough already in the days of our vanity? Never do I come to a dying man that is not utterly stupid, but he sees the worth of time. O then if they could call time back, how loud would they call! If they could but buy it, what would they not give for it! And yet we trifle it away; yea, and allow ourselves in this, and wilfully cast off the greatest works of God. O what a bewitching thing is sin, that can thus distract even wise men! It is impossible that a man of any true compassion and honesty, who has any concern for his ministerial duty, or any sense of the strictness of the account he must shortly give, should have time to spare for idleness and vanity.

I must tell you farther, brethren, that suppose others may take some time for mere delight which is not strictly necessary, yet so may not you; for your undertaking binds you to a stricter attendance. May a physician in the time of the plague take any more relaxation than is necessary for his life, when so many require his help in a case of life and death? As his pleasure is not worth men's lives, so neither is yours worth men's souls. Suppose your cities were besieged, and the enemy watching all advantages to take them by surprise, and striving continually to set them on fire; I pray you tell me, if certain men undertook to watch the ports, and others to quench the fire that might kindle in the houses, what time would you allow these men for recreation and relaxation?

At the utmost, you would allow them none but what was absolutely necessary.

Do not grudge now, and say, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" For it is your mercy; and you are well, if you know when you are well, as I shall show you in answering the next objection.

3. It is objected, "I do not think that it is required of ministers to make drudges of themselves. If they preach diligently, visit the sick, do other ministerial duties, and occasionally do good to those they converse with, I do not think that God requires we should thus tie ourselves to instruct every person distinctly, and make our lives mere slavery."

Ans. (1.) Do you think God does not require you to do all the good you can? Will you stand by and see sinners gasping under the pangs of death, and say, "God does not require me to make myself a drudge to save them?" Is this the voice of ministerial or Christian compassion, or rather of laziness and diabolical cruelty? Does God set you work to do, and will you not believe that he would have you do it? Is that the voice of obedience or of rebellion? It is all one whether you deny obedience to acknowledge duty, and say plainly, "I will obey no farther than it pleases me;" or whether you wilfully reject the evidence that should convince you that it is a duty, and say, "I will not believe it to be my duty unless it please me." It is the true character of a self-deceiver to make a religion to himself of the cheapest part of God's service, which he endeavours to reconcile with his selfish ends, and to reject the rest. To the words of hypocrisy this objection superadds the words of gross impiety. For what a wretched calumny is this against the most high God, to call his service slavery and drudgery. What thought have these men of their Master, their work, and their wages! Are they likely to honour God and promote his service who have such base thoughts of it themselves? Do they delight in holiness who account it a slavish work? Do they believe indeed the misery of sinners, who consider it

drudgery to be diligent in striving to save them? Christ says, He that denies not himself, forsakes not all, and takes not up his cross daily, and follows him, cannot be his disciple; and yet these men count it a slavery to labour hard in his vineyard, and deny themselves. If they had seen the diligence of Christ when he went about doing good, when he neglected his meat to talk with one woman, and when he had not time to eat bread, would not they have been of the same mind with his carnal friends, who went to lay hold on him, and said, "He is beside himself." They would have told him he made a drudge or a slave of himself, and that God did not require so much. If they had seen him all night in prayer, and all day preaching, and healing the diseased, it seems they would have censured him for his labour. I advise these men to search their own hearts, whether they unfeignedly believe the word that they preach. Do you believe indeed that such glory attends those who die in the Lord, and such torment those who die unconverted? If you do, how can you think any labour too much for such weighty purposes? If you do not, say so, and get you out of the vineyard. Go with the prodigal to keep swine, but do not undertake to feed the flock of Christ.

Do you not know that it is your own benefit which you call drudgery? The more you do, the more you receive: the more you lay out, the more you have coming in. If you are strangers to these Christian paradoxes, you should not have taken on you to teach them to others. At the present our incomes of spiritual life and peace are commonly in the way of duty; so that he who is most in duty has most of God. Exercise of grace increases it. And is it a slavery to be more with God, and to receive more from him than other men? It is the chief solace of a gracious soul to be doing good, and receiving by doing, and to be much exercised about those divine things which have his heart. Besides, we prepare for fuller receivings hereafter. We set our talents to usury; and by im-

proving them we shall make five become ten, and so be made rulers of ten cities. We shall be judged according to our works. Is it a drudgery to send to the utmost parts of the world to exchange our trifles for gold and jewels? Do not these men seek to justify and encourage profane sinners, who consider all diligent godliness a drudgery, and reproach it as a precise and tedious life. They say they will never believe but a man may be saved without so much ado. Even so say these in respect to the work of the ministry. They will not believe but a man may be a faithful minister without all this ado. It is a heinous sin to be negligent in such important business; but to approve of that negligence, and to plead against duty, as if it were none; and when they should lay out themselves for the saving of souls, to say, "I do not believe that God requires it;" this is so great an aggravation of the sin, that, where the church's necessity does not force us to make use of such for want of better, I cannot but think them worthy to be cast out as the rubbish, and as salt that has lost its savour, which is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill. And if such ministers become a by-word and reproach, let them thank themselves; for it is their own sin that makes them vile.

4. It is objected, "But if you make such severe laws for ministers, the church will be left without: for men will avoid it, both on account of bodily toil, and danger to their consciences, if they should not properly discharge it."

Ans. (1.) It is not we, but Christ, that hath made and imposed these laws which you call severe; and if I should silence, misinterpret, or tell you that there are no such laws, that would not relax them, nor excuse you. He that made them knew why he did it, and expects obedience to them. Is infinite goodness itself to be questioned or suspected by us as making unmerciful laws? Nay, it is mere mercy in him who imposes this great duty on us. What, must God let the souls of your neighbours perish to save you a little

labour and suffering, and this in mercy to you? O what a miserable world should we have, if blind, self-conceited man had the ruling of it?

(2.) As for a supply of pastors, Christ will take care of that. He who imposes duty has the fulness of the Spirit, and can give men hearts to obey his laws. Do you think Christ will suffer all men to be as cruel, unmerciful, and self seeking as you? He who has undertaken himself the work of our redemption, borne our transgressions, and been faithful as the chief Shepherd and Teacher of the church, will not lose all his labour and sufferings for want of instruments to carry on his work; nor will he come down again to do all himself, because no other will do it; but he will provide men to be his servants and ushers in his school, who shall willingly take the labour on them, and rejoice to be so employed, and account that the happiest life in the world which you account so great a toil, nor would they change it for all your ease and carnal pleasure; but, on the contrary, for the saving of souls, and the propagating of the gospel of Christ, they will be content to bear the burden and heat of the day, to fill up the measure of the sufferings of Christ in their bodies, to do what they do with all their might, to work while it is day, to be the servants of all, not to please themselves, but others, for their edification, to become all things to all men that they may save some, to endure all things for the elect's sake; and to spend and be spent for men, though the more they love the less they should be beloved, and should be accounted their enemies for telling them the truth; with such pastors will Christ provide his people, after his own heart, who will feed them with knowledge, as men that seek not theirs, but them. What, do you think Christ can have no servants, if such as you, with Demas, turn to the present world, and forsake him? If you dislike his service, you may seek you a better, where you can find it, and boast of your gain in the conclusion; but do not threaten him with the loss of your service. He has made such

laws as you will call severe for all who will be saved as well as for his ministers, though he impose not on them the same employment; for all must deny themselves, mortify the flesh, be crucified to the world, and take up their cross daily, and follow Christ, who will be his disciples. And yet Christ will not be without disciples, nor will he hide what some call his hard terms from men to entice them to his service, but will tell them of the worst, and then let them choose. He will call to them beforehand to count what it will cost them, and tell them that "the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He comes not to give them worldly peace and prosperity, but to call them to suffer with him, that they may reign with him, and in patience to possess their souls, and to conquer that they may be crowned with him, and sit down on his throne; and all this he will enable his followers to perform. If you be at that pass with Christ, as the Israelites were once with David, and say, "Will the son of Jesse give you fields and vineyards? Every man to your tents, O Israel;" and if you say, "Now look to thy own house, O David," you shall see that Christ will look to his own house; and do you look to yours as well as you can, and tell me at the hour of death or judgment which is the better bargain, and whether Christ had more need of you or you of him.

With regard to scrupling it in conscience for fear of failing, it is not involuntary imperfections that Christ takes so heinously, but unfaithfulness and wilful negligence: and it will not serve your turn to run out of the vineyard on pretence of scruples that you cannot do the work as you ought. He can follow you, and overtake you, as he did Jonas, with such a storm as will lay you in the belly of hell. Totally to cast off a duty, because you cannot endure to be faithful in the performance of it, will prove but a poor excuse at last. If men had but reckoned well at first of the difference between things temporal and eternal,

and of what they shall lose or get by Christ, and had that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, and lived by faith, and not by sense, all these objections would be easily resolved; and all the pleas of flesh and blood would appear to have no more reason than a sick man's plea for cold water in a pestilential fever.

5. It is objected, "But to what purpose is all this, when most of the people will not submit? Therefore we had as good let them alone as trouble ourselves to no purpose."

Ans. (1.) It is not to be denied that too many people are obstinate in their wickedness, too many simple ones love simplicity, and too many scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge. But the worse they are the more deplorable is their case, the more to be pitied, and the more diligent should we be for their recovery.

(2.) I fear it is too much owing to the conduct of ministers that a great part of the people are so obstinate and contemptuous. Did we shine and burn before them as we should; had we convincing sermons and convincing lives; did we set ourselves to do them all the good in our power, whatever it cost us; were we more humble and meek, more loving and charitable, and let them see that we set light by all worldly things in comparison of their salvation, much more might be done than is, and the mouths of many would be stopped; though still the wicked will do wickedly, yet more would be tractable, and the wicked would be fewer and calmer than they are. If you say that the ablest and most godly ministers in the world have had as untractable and scornful parishioners as any others; I answer, that even able, godly men have some of them been too lordly and strange, and some of them too uncharitable, and worldly, and backward to difficult though necessary works; and some of them have done but little in private, when they have done excellently in public, and so have hindered the fruit of their labours. But where these hinderances

have not had place, experience tells us that the success is much greater, at least as to the bowing of people to more calmness and teachableness; but we cannot expect that all should.

(3.) Their wilfulness will not excuse us from our duty. If we do not offer them our help, how do we know who will refuse it? Offering it is our part, and accepting is theirs. If we offer it not, we leave them excusable, and we are without excuse; but if they refuse our help when it is offered, we have done our part, and delivered our own souls.

(4.) If some refuse our help, others will accept it; and the success with them may be so much as to repay all our labour. All are not wrought on by our public preaching, and yet we must not on that account give it over.

(5.) It is objected, "But what probability is there that men will be informed or converted by this means who are not by the preaching of the word, when that is God's chief ordinance appointed to that end? Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word preached."

Ans. (1.) The advantages I have showed you before, and therefore will not stand to repeat them; only, lest any think that this will wrong them, by hindering them from preaching, I add to the twenty benefits before mentioned, that it will be an excellent means to help you in preaching. For as the physician's work is half done when he fully knows the disease, so when you are well acquainted with your people's case you will know what to preach on; and it will furnish you with matter to talk an hour with an ignorant or obstinate sinner, as much as an hour's study will do; for you will know what you have need to insist on, and what objections of theirs to refute.

(2.) I hope there are none so ignorant as to think personal instruction is not preaching. Does the number we speak to make it preaching; or does interlocution make it none? Surely a man may as truly

preach to one as to a thousand; and, as has already been hinted, if you search you will find that most of the gospel preaching was by conference, or serious speeches to people occasionally, and frequently interlocutory; and that with one, two, or more, as opportunity served. Thus Christ himself most commonly preached. Besides, we must take an account how our people learn what they have been taught, if we regard the success of our work.

There is nothing, therefore, from God, from the Spirit, nor from right reason, to cause us to make any question of our work, or to be unwilling to engage in it; but from the world, the flesh, and the devil we shall have much, and more perhaps than we yet expect. But against all temptations, if we have recourse to God, and look on his great obligations on one hand, and the hopeful effects and reward on the other, we shall see that we have no cause either to draw back or to faint.

Let us follow the example of St. Paul, to serve the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears; to keep back nothing that is profitable to the people, and to teach them publicly, and from house to house; that the matter of our preaching be repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; that though we go bound in the Spirit, not knowing particularly what shall befall us, but only that everywhere bonds and afflictions await us, yet none of these things shall move us, neither will we count our life dear, so that we may finish our course with joy, and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God; to take heed to ourselves and all the flock, particularly against domestic seducers and schisms, without ceasing to warn every one, day and night, with tears; to covet no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, as counting it more honourable to give than to receive. O what a lesson is here before us; but how ill is it learned by those who still question whether all this be their duty. I confess some of these words of Paul have so often

been presented before my eyes, and stuck upon my conscience, that I have been deeply convinced by them both of my duty and negligence: and I think this one speech better deserves a twelve months' study than most things that young students lay out their time in. O brethren, write it on your own study doors, or set it as your copy in capital letters still before your eyes! Could we but properly learn two or three lines of it, what preachers we should be! (1.) Our general business, *Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.* (2.) Our special work, *Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock.* (3.) Our doctrine, *Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.* (4.) The place and manner of teaching, *I have taught you publicly, and from house to house.* (5.) The object and internal manner, *I ceased not to warn every one, night and day, with tears.* This is it that must win souls, and preserve them. (6.) His innocence and self-denial for the advantage of the gospel, *I have coveted no man's silver or gold.* (7.) His patience, *None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear.* (8.) And among all our motives, these have need to be strikingly placed before our eyes; we oversee and feed *the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood—Grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock—Of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

Write all this upon your hearts, and it will do yourselves and the church more good than twenty years' study of lower things, which, though they may gain you greater applause in the world, yet, separate from these, will make you but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

The great advantage of our having a sincere heart is, that God and glory, and the saving of souls, are then our immediate end; and where that end is truly intended, no labour or suffering will stop or turn us back. Then we retain this lesson, whatever we for-

get, *One thing is necessary—seek first the kingdom of God;* and therefore say, "Necessity is laid upon me, and wo unto me if I preach not the gospel!" This it is that will most effectually make easy all our labours, make light all our burdens, make all our sufferings seem tolerable, and cause us to venture on any hazard in the way. That which I once made the motto of my colours in another warfare, I desire may be still before my eyes in this, which yet, according to my intention, is not altogether another. On one side, *He that saveth his life shall lose it;* on the other, *Nec propter vitam vivendi perdere causas.* This, Dr. Reignolds thought, had reason enough in it to hold him to his labours, though it cost him his life. He who knows that he serves a God that will never suffer any man to be a loser by him need not fear what hazard he runs in his cause: and he who knows that he seeks a prize which, if obtained, will infinitely overmatch his cost, may boldly engage his whole estate on it, and sell all to purchase so rich a pearl.

Brethren, I will spend no more words in exhorting wise merchants to such a bargain, or telling teachers themselves of such common truths; and if I have said more than needs already, I am glad. I hope now I may take it for granted that you are resolved on the utmost diligence and fidelity in the work, on which supposition I shall now proceed.

CHAPTER VII.

Directions to the less experienced for the proper management of this work. How to bring the people to submit to it—To do it in the manner that is most likely to insure success—For the conversion of the ungodly, and awakening of the secure.

It is so happy a work which we have before us, that it is a thousand pities it should be destroyed in the birth, and perish in our hands. Though I know we have a knotty generation to deal with, and that it

is past the power of any of us to change a carnal heart without the effectual grace of the Holy Ghost; yet it is so usual with God to work by means, and to bless the right endeavours of his servants, that I cannot fear but great things will be done, and a wonderful blow given to the kingdom of darkness by our work, if it do not miscarry, through the fault of the ministers themselves. The chief danger is, want of diligence and skill. Of the former I have spoken much already. As for the latter, I am so conscious of my own unskilfulness, that I am far from imagining myself fit to give directions to any but the younger and unexperienced in the work of the ministry; and therefore you will suppose me now to speak to none but such. I cannot pass over this part in silence, because the number of such is great, and I am persuaded that the welfare of the church and nation greatly depends on the management and success of this work.

The points wherein you have need to be solicitous are two: (1.) To bring your people to submit to this course of private instruction; for if they will not come near you, what good can they receive? (2.) To do the work so as may most tend to the success of it when they do come.

I. With respect to the *first*, the best directions that I can give are the following.

1. The chief means of all is, for a minister so to behave himself in the main course of his ministry and life as may tend to convince his people of his ability, sincerity, and unfeigned love to them; for if they take him to be ignorant, they will despise his teaching, and think themselves as wise as he. If they think him self-seeking, or hypocritical, they will suspect all that he says and does for them, and will not regard him. If they think he intends but to domineer over their consciences, or to trouble them, or merely to exercise their wit and memory, they will flee away from him as from an adversary, and from his endeavours, as hurtful and disgusting. Whereas, when they are convinced that he understands what he does, and have

high thoughts of his abilities, they will reverence him, and the more readily stoop to his advice. When they are persuaded of his uprightness, they will the less suspect the steps he may take for their edification; and when they perceive that he intends no private ends of his own, but merely their good, they will the sooner be persuaded by him. Because those to whom I write are supposed not to be the most able ministers, and therefore may despair of being reverenced for their parts, I say to such: (1.) You have the more need to study and labour for their increase. (2.) You must necessarily have that which makes the lowest degree tolerable; and it will produce some reverence when they know you are wiser than themselves. (3.) And that which you want in ability must be made up in the other qualifications, and then your advice may be as successful as others.

If ministers would condescend to their people, and be familiar and loving with them, prudent in their carriage among them, and, according to their ability, abound in good works, they might do much more than usually they do. Not that we should much regard an interest in them for our own sakes, but that we may be more capable of promoting the interest of Christ, and of farthering their salvation. Were it not for their own sakes, it were no great matter whether they love or hate us. But what commander can do any great service by an army that hates him? And how can we think that they will regard our counsel, while they abhor or disregard the persons who give it? Labour, therefore, for some competent interest in your people's esteem and affection, and then you may the better prevail with them.

Obj. But what should a minister do who finds he has quite lost his people's esteem and affection?

Ans. If they be so vile a people that they hate him not for any weakness, nor through misreports about particular things, but merely for endeavouring their good, though in prudence as well as zeal, and would hate any other that should do his duty; then must he

in patience and meekness continue to instruct those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. But if it be upon any weaknesses of his, or difference in lesser opinions, or prejudice merely against his own person, let him try first to remove the prejudice by all lawful means; and if he cannot, let him tell them, "It is not for myself but for you that I labour; and, therefore, seeing that you will not obey the word from me, I desire that you will agree to accept of some other that may do you that good which I cannot:" and so leave them, and try whether another man may not be fitter for them, and he for another people. An ingenuous man can hardly stay with a people against their wills; and a sincere man can more hardly, for any interest of his own, remain in a place where he is likely to be unprofitable, to hinder the good which they might receive from another man, who has the advantage of a greater interest in their estimation and affection.

2. Supposing then this general preparation, the next thing to be done is, to use the most effectual means to convince them of the benefit and necessity of this mode of instruction for their own souls. The way to win the consent of any man to what you offer him, is to prove it to be good for him and to do this by evidence suited to his understanding; for if you cannot make him believe that it is good or necessary for him, he will not receive it. You must therefore preach to them some plain and convincing sermons to this purpose beforehand, which shall fully show them the benefit and necessity of the knowledge of divine truths in general, and of knowing the first principles in particular; and that the aged have as much need as others, and in some respects much more. Heb. v, 12, affords us many observations suitable to our business. As, (1.) That God's oracles must be man's lessons. (2.) Ministers must teach these, and people must learn them. (3.) The oracles of God have some fundamentals, which all must know who

will be saved. (4.) These fundamentals must be first learned. (5.) It may be expected that people will grow in knowledge according to the means or teaching which they possess; and if they do not, it is their sin. (6.) If any have lived long in the church under the means of knowledge, and yet be ignorant of these first principles, they have need to be taught them again. All this is plain from the text, whence we have a fair opportunity by twenty clear and convincing reasons, to show them the necessity of knowing God's oracles, especially the first principles; in particular for the aged, who have lost so much time already, have long promised to repent when they were old, should now have been teachers of others, and whose ignorance therefore is a double sin and shame. Convince them how impossible it is to walk in the way to heaven without knowing it, when there are so many difficulties and enemies in their way. Men cannot do their worldly business without knowledge, nor learn a trade without an apprenticeship. Who can love, or seek, or desire that which he knows not? Convince them what a contradiction it is to be a Christian, and yet to refuse to learn. For what is a Christian but a disciple of Christ, and how can he be his disciple who refuses to be taught by him? They who refuse to be taught by his ministers refuse to be taught by him; for Christ will not come down from heaven again to teach them by his own mouth, but has appointed his ministers to keep school and teach them under him. To say therefore that they will not be taught by his ministers, is to say they will not be taught by Christ; and that is to say they will be none of his disciples. Abundance of such undeniable evidences we have to convince them of their duty. Make them understand that it is not an arbitrary business of our own devising and imposing, but that necessity is laid upon us, and if we look not to every member of the flock according to our power, they may perish in their iniquities, but their blood will be required at our hands: it is God, and not we, who is

the contriver and imposer of this work. Would they be so cruel as to wish a minister to lose his own soul for fear of troubling them, by striving to prevent their damnation? Especially acquaint them fully with the true nature of the ministerial office, the church's necessity of it, and that it consists in teaching and guiding all the flock; show them that they must come to the congregation as scholars to school, and must be content to give account of their learning, and be instructed man by man. Let them know what a tendency this has to their salvation, what a profitable improvement it will be of their time, how much vanity and evil it will prevent; and when they once find that it is for their own good, they will the more easily yield to it.

3. When this is done, it will be necessary to give one of the catechisms to every family, poor and rich, that they may be so far without excuse; for if you leave it to themselves, perhaps half of them will not get them. Whereas, when they are put into their hands, the receiving of them is a kind of engagement to learn them; and if they do but read the exhortation, it will perhaps convince and excite them to submit. In delivering them, the best way is, for the minister first to give notice in the congregation that they shall be brought to their houses, and then to go himself from house to house and deliver them, and take that opportunity of persuading them to the work; and as you go, take a catalogue of all the persons at years of discretion in the several families, that you may know whom you have to take care of and instruct, and whom to expect when it comes to their turn. If the minister be able, it will be well for him to bear the charge of the books; if not, the richer part of his people should bear it among them: or on a day of humiliation preparatory to the work, let the collection that is wont to be made for the poor be employed to buy catechisms, and the people desired to be more liberal. As for the order of proceeding in small parishes, it is no great matter; but in large ones it will be needful to take them in order, family by family, be-

ginning the execution a month or six weeks after the delivery of the books, that they may have time to learn; and thus, taking them together in common, they will the more willingly come.

(4.) Be sure you deal gently with them, and remove every discouragement as effectually as you can. (1.) Tell them publicly that if they have learned any other catechism already, you will not urge them to learn this, unless they desire it themselves: for the substance of all catechisms that are orthodox is the same; only our reason for offering them this was its brevity and fulness, that we might give them as much as we could in few words. If any of them would rather learn any other orthodox catechism, let them have their choice. (2.) As for old people of weak memories, who complain that they cannot remember the words, tell them you do not expect that they should perplex their minds about it, but hear it often read over, see that they understand it, and get the matter into their minds and hearts; and then they may be borne with, though they remember not the words. (3.) And let your dealing with those whom you begin with be so gentle, convincing, and winning, that the report of it may be an encouragement to others to come.

5. If all this will not serve to bring any particular persons to submit, do not so cast them off; but go to them, and expostulate the case with them; know what their reasons are, and convince them of the sinfulness and danger of their contempt of the help that is offered them. A soul is so precious that we should not lose one for want of labour; but follow them while there is any hope, and not give them up as desperate till there be no remedy. Before we give them over as dogs or swine, let us try the utmost, that we may have the experience of their obstinate contempt, or renting us to warrant our forsaking them. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind."

II. Having used these means to procure them to come and submit to your teaching, the next thing to be considered is, how you should deal with them in

the work: and again I must say, that I think it an easier matter by far to compose and preach a good sermon, than to deal properly with an ignorant man for his instruction in the necessary principles of religion. Much as this work is contemned by some, I doubt not but it will try the parts and spirits of ministers more fully than pulpit-preaching will do. Here I will transcribe the words of Archbishop Usher: "Great scholars may possibly think it beneath them to spend so much of their time in teaching the first principles of the doctrine of Christ; but they should consider that laying the foundation skilfully, as it is matter of the greatest importance in the whole building, so it is the very master-piece of the wisest builder. "According to the grace of God which is given me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation," says the great apostle. And let the most learned and wisest of us try it whenever we please, we shall find, that to lay this groundwork properly, to apply ourselves to the capacity of our people individually, and to make an ignorant man understand the grounds of religion, will put us to the trial of our skill. Christ gave as well his apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, as his ordinary pastors and teachers, to bring us all, both learned and unlearned, to the unity of this faith and knowledge; and the neglecting of this is the frustrating of the whole work of the ministry; for, let us preach ever so many sermons to the people, our labour is but lost as long as the foundation is unlaid, and the first principles untaught, upon which all other doctrines must be built."

The directions which I think necessary to be observed in managing the work, for matter and manner, are the following:—

1. When your neighbours come to you, one family or more, begin with a brief preface to prepare them for the cordial reception of your instructions. "Neighbours and brethren, it may perhaps seem to some of you an unusual and troublesome business that I have put you upon; but I hope you will not think it need-

less; for if I had thought so, I should have spared you and myself this labour. But my conscience has told me, yea, God has told me in his word, what it is to have the charge of men's souls, and how the blood of them that perish in their sins will be required at the hands of the minister who neglects them, and I dare not be guilty of it. Alas, all our business in this world is to get well to heaven; and God has appointed us to be guides to his people, to help them safe thither. If this be well done, all is done; and if this be not done, we are for ever undone! The Lord knows how short a time you and I may be together; and therefore it concerns us to do what we can for our own and your salvation, before we leave you, or you leave the world. All other employments in the world are but toys and dreams in comparison of this. The labours of your calling are but to prop up the cottages of your flesh, while you are making ready for death and judgment, which God knows is near at hand. I hope, therefore, you will be glad of help in such a needful work, and not think it much that I put you to this trouble, when the trifles of the world cannot be got without greater trouble." This, or something to this purpose, may tend to make them more willing to hear you, and receive instruction, and give you an account of their knowledge and practice, which must be the work of the day.

2. When you have spoken thus to them all, then take them one by one, and deal with them in private. For some cannot speak freely before others; some cannot endure to be questioned before others, because they are ashamed to have them hear their answers; and some who can give better answers will be ready when they are gone to tattle of what they heard, and to despise those who spake not so well as they did. You must therefore be very prudent to prevent all these inconveniences. But the main reason is, as I find by experience, people will better take plain, close dealing, about their sin, and misery, and duty, when you have them alone, than they will before others; and if

you have not opportunity to set it home, and deal freely with them, you will frustrate all. If, therefore, you have a convenient place, let the rest stay in one room while you confer with each person separately in another; only, in order to avoid the appearance of evil, we must speak to the women in the presence of some others: and if we do lose some advantage by it, with regard to the success of our instructions, there is no remedy; better do so than, by giving occasion to those who are seeking it, destroy the whole work. Yet we may so contrive it as to let none be present but the members of the same family, or those who are most familiar, and therefore not likely to reproach one another. In your rousing examinations and reproofs, address yourselves chiefly to the most ignorant, secure, and vicious, that you may have the clearer ground for your *closet-dealing*, and that the hearing of it may awaken bystanders, to whom you seem not so directly to apply it. These small things deserve attention, because they are parts of a work that is not small; and small errors may hinder a great deal of good.

3. Begin your work by taking an account of what they have learned of the catechism, receiving their answer to each question; and if they are able to recite little or none of it, try whether they can rehearse the creed and the decalogue.

4. Then choose out some of the weightiest points, and try how they understand them. In so doing, be careful, (1.) That you do not begin with less necessary points, but those which they themselves may perceive do most clearly concern them: as, "What do you think becomes of men after death? Do you believe you have sin in you; that you were born in sin; and what does sin deserve? What remedy has God provided for guilty, miserable sinners? Has any one suffered for our sins in our stead, or must we suffer for them ourselves? Who are they whom God will pardon? Who shall be saved by the blood of Christ? What change must be made on all that shall

be saved? How is it made? Wherein consists our chief happiness? What must our hearts be most set upon?" and such like. (2.) Take heed of asking them nice, needless, or doubtful and very difficult questions, though about matters that are of the greatest importance in themselves. Especially be very cautious how you put them upon definitions or descriptions. Some self-conceited men will be busy with questions which they cannot answer themselves, and as censorious and severe with the poor people who cannot answer them, as if life and death depended thereon. You will ask them, perhaps, What is God? And how defective an answer must you make yourselves? You may tell what he is not sooner than what he is. If you ask, What is repentance, what is faith, or what is forgiveness of sin? how many ministers may you ask before you have a right answer, or else they would not differ so widely in their opinions on these points. So if you ask them what regeneration is, what sanctification is? But you will perhaps say, "If men know not what God is, what repentance, faith, conversion, justification, and sanctification are, how can they be true Christians?" I answer, It is one thing to know exactly what they are, and another thing to know them in their nature and effects, though with a more general and indistinct knowledge; and it is one thing to know, and another to tell what this or that is. The very name, as commonly used, signifies to them, and expresses for them, the thing without a definition; and they partly understand what that name signifies, when they cannot tell it you in other words. As they know what it is to repent, to believe, to be forgiven; by custom of speech they know what these mean, and yet cannot define them. Yet I do not absolutely dissuade you from the use of such questions; but to do it cautiously, in case you suspect some gross ignorance in the point, especially about God himself. (3.) In such a case, so contrive your question, that they may perceive what you mean, and that it is not a nice definition, but a necessary

solution you expect. Look not after words, but things, and there leave them only a bare yea or nay, or the mere election of one of the two descriptions which you yourself shall propound. As, What is God? Is he made of flesh and blood, as we are, or is he an invisible spirit? Had he any beginning? Can he die? What is faith? Is it a believing all the word of God? What is it to believe in Christ? Is it all one as to become a true Christian; or to believe that Christ is the Saviour of the world, and to accept him for your Saviour, to pardon, teach, govern, and glorify you? What is repentance? Is it only to be sorry for sin; or is it the change of the mind from sin to God, or both? (4.) Where you perceive they understand not the stress of your question, you must lead them into it by other questions. So I have asked some, How do you think your many and great sins will be pardoned? And they tell me, by their repenting and mending their lives, and never mention Jesus Christ. I ask them farther, But do you think your amendment will make any satisfaction for your past sins? They answer, "We hope so; or else we know not what will?" One would think now these had no knowledge of Christ at all: and some I find have indeed none. Hence, when I tell them the history of the gospel, and what Christ did and suffered, and why, they wonder at it as a strange thing that they had never heard before, and say, they never heard this much till now, though they came to church every Lord's day. But others, I perceive, give such answers, because they understand not the scope of my question. And if I ask farther, "Can you be saved without the death of Christ?" They say, "No." And if I ask, "What has he done or suffered for you?" they will say, "He shed his blood for us;" and will profess that they place their confidence in that for salvation. Many men have that in their minds which is not ripe for utterance, and through want of education and practice, they are strangers to the expressions of those things which they have some

conceptions of: and, by the way, you may here see how needful it is to deal very tenderly with the common people for matter of knowledge and defect of expression, if they are teachable, and willing to use means, and to live obediently; for many, even aged, godly persons, cannot speak their minds in any tolerable expressions; no, nor can learn when expressions are put into their mouths. Some of the most pious, experienced, and approved Christians that I know, complain exceedingly to me with tears that they cannot learn the words of the catechism; and when I consider their advantages, that they have lived under the most excellent helps, in constant duty, and in the best company, forty, fifty, or sixty years together, it teaches me what to expect from poor ignorant people who have not had such advantages, and not to reject them so hastily as some hot and too high professors would have us do. (5.) When you find them at a loss, and perceive them troubled that they cannot answer, step in yourself and take the burden off them, answering the question yourself, and then do it thoroughly and plainly, and make a full explication of the whole business to them, that by your teaching they may be brought to understand it before you leave them.

5. Thus, when you have tried their knowledge, proceed next to instruct them yourselves, according to their several capacities. If he be a professor who understands the fundamentals, fall on what you perceive he most needs, either explaining farther some of the doctrines of the gospel, or some duty which he may doubt of, or showing the necessity of what he neglects, as may be most convincing and edifying to him. If it be one that is grossly ignorant, give him a plain recital of the sum of the Christian religion in a few words, as thus: "You must know that from everlasting there was one only God, who had no beginning, and can have no end; who is not a body as we are, but a most pure, spiritual being, who knows all things, and can do all things, and has all goodness

and blessedness in himself. This God is but one; but yet three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in an incomprehensible manner, above our reach: yet we have somewhat in ourselves and other creatures that may give us some resemblance of it. As in a man, his power, and his understanding and will, are but one soul, and yet they are not one faculty, but differ one from another; or as in the sun the being or power, and the heat and the light, are not all one, and yet there is but one sun: so, in a more incomprehensible manner, it is in God. And you must know that this one God made all the world by his word; the heavens he made to be the place of his glory, and made a world of holy angels to serve him in his glory; but some of these, by pride or other sin, fell from God, and are become devils, who shall be miserable in torments for ever. When he had made the rest of this lower world, he made man, as his noblest creature here, even one man and one woman, Adam and Eve; and he made them perfect without any sin or fault, and put them into the garden of Eden, and forbid them to eat but of one tree in the garden, and told them that if they did they should die: but the devil, who had first fallen himself, tempted them to sin, and they yielded to his temptation, and by wilfully sinning, fell under the curse of God's law, and fell short of the glory of God. But God of his infinite wisdom and mercy sent his own Son Jesus Christ to be their Redeemer, who, as he was promised in the beginning, so in the fulness of time, 1800 years ago, was made man, and was born of a virgin by the power of the Holy Ghost, and lived on earth among the Jews about thirty-three years; and he preached the gospel himself, and wrought many miracles to prove his doctrine and bring men to believe in him, healing the lame, the blind, the sick, and raising the dead by the word of his mouth by his divine power; and at the end, by the malice of the Jews and his own consent, he was offered up on the cross, as a sacrifice for our sins, to bear that curse that we should have

borne; and when he was buried, he rose again the third day, and lived on earth forty days after, and before his departure he sent his apostles and other ministers to preach the gospel of salvation to the world, and to call home lost sinners by repentance, and to assure them in his name that if they will but believe in him, and take him for their Saviour, and unfeignedly lament their former sins, and turn from them to God, and will take everlasting glory for their portion, and be content to resign their carnal interests and desires, he will pardon freely all that is past, and be merciful to them for the time to come, and will lead them up into spiritual communion with God, and bring them to his glory when this life is ended: but for those who make light of their sins and of God's mercy, and will not forsake the pleasures of this world for the hopes of another, they shall be condemned to everlasting punishment. This gospel Christ has appointed his ministers to preach to all the world; and when he had given this in charge to his apostles, he ascended up into heaven before their faces, where he is now in glory with God the Father, in our nature, ruling all: and at the end of this world he will come again in that nature, and will call the dead to life again, and set them all before him to be judged; and all that truly repented and believed in him, and were renewed by his Spirit, and renounced this world for the hopes of a better, shall be judged to live with God in glory, and shall be like his angels, and praise him for ever; and the rest that repented not, and believed not in him, but lived to the flesh and the world, shall be condemned to everlasting misery. So that you may see by this that man's happiness is not in this world, but in the next, and that all men have lost their hopes of that happiness by sin, and that Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, and the Redeemer of the world, has recovered it for us by the price of his blood, and has made a new covenant with us, assuring us of life and salvation, if we repent and believe in him for that life, and mortify our fleshly desires. To this end he sends

forth his Holy Spirit to convert all that shall be saved, and to turn their hearts from this world to God. If ever you mean to be saved, therefore, it must be thus with you: your former sins must be the grief of your soul, and you must fly to a crucified Christ as your only refuge from the deserved curse; and the Spirit of Christ must convert you, and dwell in you, and make you wholly a new creature, or there is no salvation." And if you perceive they do not understand you, go over it again till they do; and, if possible, fix it in their memories.

6. Whether they be grossly ignorant or not, in the next place, make a prudent inquiry into their state; and the best way will be by a few words to prepare their minds, and convince them of the necessity of it. Suppose to this purpose: "You read in the Scriptures of truth that the Holy Ghost, by the word, enlightens men's minds, and softens and opens their hearts, and turns them from the power of Satan to God, by faith in Christ, thereby making them a sanctified, peculiar people to God; and that none but such are made partakers of Christ. Now though I have no desire needlessly to pry into any man's state, yet because it is the office of ministers to give advice to people in the matters of salvation, and because it is so dangerous to be mistaken where life or death everlasting lies upon it, I would entreat you to deal truly, and tell me whether you ever found this great change wrought upon your heart or not? Did you ever find the Spirit of God, by the word, come in upon your understanding with such power, light, and life, as made you a new creature? The Lord who sees your heart knows whether it be so or not; therefore, I pray you, see that you speak the truth!" If he tell you, he hopes he is converted —all are sinners—but he is sorry for his sins; then tell him more particularly what true conversion is, and so renew and enforce the inquiry thus: "Because your salvation or damnation depends upon it, I would fain help you a little, that you may not be mistaken in a business of such consequence, but may find out the

truth before it be too late; for as God will judge us impartially, so we have his word before us, by which we may know now how God will judge us then; for this word tells us most certainly who shall go to heaven, and who to hell. Now the Scripture tells us that the state of an unconverted man is this: he sees no great matter of felicity in the everlasting enjoyment of God in the life to come, which may draw his heart thither from this present world; but he lives to himself, and the main bent of his life is, that it may go well with his body here. The world and flesh are highest in his esteem and nearest to his heart, and God and glory stand below them and farther off, and all his service of God is but giving him that which the world and flesh can spare. This is the true case of every unconverted man, and all who are in this state are in a state of misery. But he who is truly converted has had a light shining into his soul from God, which has showed him the greatness of his sin and misery, and made it a heavy load upon his soul; it has also showed him Christ, and what he has done for sinners, and made him admire the riches of God's grace in him. O what glad news it is to him, that yet there is hope for such lost sinners as he —that so many and so great sins may be pardoned— and that this is offered to all that will accept it! How gladly does he entertain this message and offer: and for the time to come he resigns himself and all that he has to Christ, to be wholly his, and disposed of by him, in order to the everlasting glory which he has promised. He has now such a sight of the blessed state of the saints in glory, that he despises all this world as dross and dung in comparison of it, and there he lays up his happiness and his hopes, and takes all the matters of this life but as so many helps or hinderances in the way to that; so that the very bent and main care and business of his life is to be happy in the life to come. This is the case of all that are truly converted and shall be saved. Is this your case or not? Have you found such a change as

this upon your soul?" If he say he hopes he has, descend to some particulars. "I pray you then answer these two or three questions:—(1.) Can you truly say that all the known sins of your past life are the grief of your heart, that you have felt everlasting misery is due to you for them, and that in the sense of this heavy burden you have felt yourself a lost man, and have gladly entertained the news of a Saviour, and cast your soul upon Christ alone for pardon by his blood? (2.) Can you truly say that your heart is so far turned from your former sins, that you hate the sins which formerly you loved, and love that holy life which you had no mind to before, and that you do not now live in the wilful practice of any known sin? Is there no sin which you are not heartily willing to part with, whatever it cost you, and no duty which you are not willing to perform? (3.) Can you truly say that you have so far taken the everlasting enjoyment of God for your happiness, that it has the most of your heart, of your love, desire, and care; and that you are resolved by the strength of grace to let go all you have in this world rather than hazard it, and that it is your daily and principal business to seek it? Can you truly say that, though you have your failings, yet your main care and the bent of your whole life is to please God and enjoy him for ever; and that your worldly business is but as a traveller seeking provision in his journey, and heaven is your home?" If he say yea to the first and third, tell him how great a thing it is for a man's heart to abhor his sin, unfeignedly to lay up his happiness in another world, and to live in this world for one that is out of sight; and therefore desire him to see that it be so indeed. If he say yea to the second question, then read over some of those duties which you most suspect him to omit; and ask him whether he performs such or such a duty, especially family and private prayer, and the holy spending of all the Lord's day.

7. When you have, by these inquiries into his spiritual state, reason to conclude that he is yet uncon-

verted, your next business is to endeavour with all your skill and power to bring his heart to a sense of his condition. "Truly, neighbour, I have no desire, the Lord knows, to make your condition worse than it is, nor to fill you with unnecessary fear and trouble: but I suppose you would take me for a flattering enemy, and not a faithful friend, if I should daub you, and not tell you the truth. If you sought to a physician in your sickness, you would wish him to tell you the truth, though it were the worst. Much more here: for there the knowledge of your disease might by fears be increased; but here you must know it, or else you can never be recovered from it. I much fear that you are yet a stranger to the new life of all those whom Christ will save: for if you were truly converted, your very heart would be set on God and the life to come; you would admire the riches of grace in Christ, you would make it your business to prepare for eternity, and you durst not, you would not live in any wilful sin, nor in the neglect of any known duties. Alas! what have you done? How have you spent your time till now? Did you not know that you had a soul to save or lose, and that you must live in heaven or hell for ever, and that you had your life and time in this world to prepare for heaven! Alas, what have you been doing all this while, that you are so ignorant, and so unprepared for death, if it should now find you? If you had but as much minded heaven as earth, you would have known more of it, done more for it, and inquired more diligently after it than you have. You can learn how to do your business in the world, and why could you not have learned more of the will of God? You have neighbours that could learn more, who have had as much to do in the world as you, and as little time. Do you think that heaven is not worth your labour, or that it can be had without care and pains, when you cannot have the trifles of this world without seeking after them, and when God has commanded you first to seek his kingdom, and the right-

eousness thereof? Alas, neighbour, what if you had died before this hour, in an unconverted state! What had become of you, and where had you now been? Why, you did not know all this while that you should live a day to an end. O that ever you should be so cruel to yourself as to venture your everlasting state so desperately as you have done! What did you think of? Did you not all this while know that you must shortly die, and be judged as you were then found? Had you any greater work to do, or any greater business to mind, than your salvation? Do you think that all you can get in this world will comfort you in a dying hour, or purchase your salvation, or ease the pains of hell fire?" Set these things home with a more earnest voice than the former part of your discourse; for if you get not to the heart, you do nothing.

8. Conclude the whole with a practical exhortation, which must contain two parts: (1.) The duty of the heart, in order to a closure with Christ, and what is contained in that closure. (2.) The use of external means for the time to come, and the avoiding of former sins. "Neighbour, I am heartily sorry to find you in so sad a case, but I should be more sorry to leave you in it; and therefore let me entreat you for the Lord's sake, and for your own sake, to regard what I shall say to you for the time to come. It is the Lord's great mercy that he did not cut you off in your unconverted state, that you have yet life and time, and that there is a sufficient remedy provided for your soul in the blood of Christ; and he is yet offered with pardon and life to you as well as others. God has not left sinful man to utter desperation for want of a ransom by a Redeemer, as he has done the devils, nor has he made any exception in the offer and promise of pardon and life against you any more than against others. If you had yet but a bleeding heart for sin, and would come to Christ believingly for recovery, and resign yourself to him as your Saviour and Lord, the Lord would have mercy on you, pardon your sins,

and save your soul; and I must tell you that as it must be the work of God's grace to give you such a heart; so, if ever he pardon and save you, he will work this change in you that I have mentioned: he will make you feel your sin as the heaviest burden in the world, as that which is most odious in itself, and has laid you open to the curse of God: he will make you see that you are a lost man, and that there is no way but one for you, everlasting damnation, unless you are pardoned by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit: he will make you see the need you have of Christ, and how much you are beholden to him for the shedding of his blood, and how all your hope and life is in him: he will make you see the vanity of this world, and all that it can afford you, and that all your happiness is with God, in that everlasting life, where, with saints and angels, you may behold his glory, and live in his presence, and praise him for ever, when those who reject him shall be tormented with the devils: and because it is only Christ the Redeemer that can bring you to that glory, and deliver you from that torment, he will make you look to him as your hope and life, cast your burdened soul upon him, and give yourself up to be saved, and taught, and ruled by him; and he will possess you with the spirit of holiness, that your heart shall be set upon God and heaven as your treasure, and the care of your mind, and the business of your life shall be to obtain it; and you shall despise this world, deny yourself, and cast away the sin with abhorrence which you delighted in; and count no pains too great, nor no suffering too dear, for the obtaining of that everlasting life. Let me tell you, that till this work is done you are a miserable man; and if you die before it is done, you are lost for ever. Now you have hope and help before you, but then there will be none. Let me therefore entreat these two or three things of you, and do not deny them me, as you love your soul: (1.) That you will not rest in this condition. Be not quiet in your mind till you find a true conversion wrought. Think when you rise in

the morning, O what if this day should be my last, and death should find me in an unrenewed state! Think when you are about your labour, O how much greater work have I to do to get my soul reconciled to God and possessed of his Spirit! Think when you are eating, or drinking, or looking on any thing that you possess in the world, What good will all this do me if I live and die an enemy to God, a stranger to Christ and his Spirit, and so perish for ever? Let these thoughts be day and night upon your mind till your soul be changed. (2.) Think seriously what a vain thing this world is, and how shortly it will leave you to a cold grave, and to everlasting misery, if you have not a better treasure. Think what it is to live in the presence of God, to reign with Christ, and be like the angels; and that this is the life that Christ has procured you, and is preparing for you, and freely offers you, if you will accept it in and with himself, upon his easy and reasonable terms. Think whether it be not madness to slight such endless glory, and to prefer these fleshly dreams and earthly shadows before it. Use yourself to such considerations as these when you are alone, and let them dwell upon your mind. (3.) Presently, without any more delay, accept of this felicity, and this Saviour. Close with the Lord Jesus, who offers you this eternal life. Joyfully and thankfully accept his offer as the only way to make you happy; and then you may believe that all your sins shall be done away by him. (4.) Resolve presently against your former sins; find out what has defiled your heart and life, and cast it away, by repentance, as you would poison out of your stomach, and abhor the thought of taking it in again. (5.) Set yourself closely to the use of God's means till this change be wrought, and then continue his means till you are confirmed, and at last perfected. Because you cannot of yourselves make this change in your heart and life, apply daily to God for it; and beg earnestly, as for your life, that he will pardon all your sins, change your heart, show you the riches of his grace in Christ,

and the glory of his kingdom, and draw up your heart to himself. Follow God day and night with these requests. Fly from temptations and occasions of sin, and forsake your former evil company, and associate with those who fear God, and will help you in the way to heaven. Especially spend the Lord's day in holy exercises, both public and private, and lose not one quarter of an hour of your time, particularly of that most precious time which God has given you purposely that you may set your mind upon him, be instructed by him, and prepare yourself for your latter end. What say you? Will you do this presently, at least so much of it as you can? Will you promise me to think of these things that I have mentioned, and to pray daily for a change of heart till you have obtained it, and to change your company and courses, and fall upon the use of God's means in reading and hearing the Scriptures, and meditating on them, especially on the Lord's day?" And here be sure, if you can, to get their promise to forsake sin, change their company, and use the appointed means, and in this way wait for that change without which they must perish; and do this solemnly, reminding them of the presence of God, who hears their promises, and will expect the performance.

9. Before you dismiss them, add a few words to this effect: "I pray you take it not ill that I have put you to this trouble, or dealt thus freely with you! It is as little pleasure to me as to you. If I did not know these things to be true and necessary, I would have spared this labour to myself and you. But I know that we shall be here but a little while—we are almost at the next world already—and therefore it is time for us all to look about us, and see that we be ready when God shall call us." Put them in a way for perfecting what is begun. Engage the head of each family to call all his family to give an account, every Lord's-day evening, before they go to bed, what they can rehearse of the catechism, and so to continue till they have all learned it perfectly; and when

they have done so, yet still to continue to hear them recite it, that they may not forget it: for even to the most judicious it will be an excellent help to have still in memory a sum of the Christian doctrine, for matter, method, and words. As for the rulers of families themselves, or those who are under such rulers as will not help them, if they have learned some small part of the catechism only, engage them either to come again to you, when they have learned the rest, or else to go to some experienced neighbour and recite it to him, that they may have his assistance when they cannot have yours.

10. Have all the names of your parishioners by you in a book; and when they come and recite the catechism, note in your book who come, and who do not; and who are so ignorant as to be utterly unfit for the Lord's supper and the other holy communion, and who not. As you perceive the necessities of each, so deal with them for the future.

11. Through the whole course of your conference with them, see that the manner as well as the matter be suited to the end. Concerning the manner observe these particulars:—(1.) Speak differently, according to the difference of the persons you have to deal with. To the dull and obstinate you must be more earnest and sharp; to the tender and timorous that are already humbled you must rather insist on direction and confirmation; to the young you must point out the danger of worldly and sensual pleasures, and show them the nature and necessity of mortification; to the aged you must show the vanity of this present world, and make them apprehensive of the nearness of their change, and the aggravations of their sin, if they live and die in ignorance and impenitence; to inferiors, and the younger sort, you must be more free; to superiors and elders, more respectful; to the rich, the deceitfulness of riches, and the nature and necessity of self-denial must be opened, and the dreadful consequence of preferring present prosperity to future happiness, as also the necessity of improving their talents

in well-doing; to the poor, show the riches of glory which are propounded to them in the gospel, and how well present things may be spared where those may be secured. Also those sins must be most insisted on to which their age, sex, or calling and employment in the world most exposes them. (2.) Be as condescending, familiar, and plain, as is possible with those who are of a weaker capacity. (3.) Give them Scripture proof for all you say, that they may see it is not you only, but God by you that speaks to them. (4.) Be as serious in all, but especially in the applicatory part, as you can. I scarcely fear any thing more than lest some ministers should slubber over the work, and do it superficially and without life, and destroy this, as they do all other duties, by turning it into mere formality; putting a few cold questions to them, and giving them two or three cold words of advice, without any life and feeling in themselves, and therefore not likely to produce any in the hearers. But surely he who values souls, and knows what an opportunity is before him, will apply himself to it with all his might. (5.) To this end I think it very necessary that we, both before and in the work, take special pains with our own hearts; especially to excite and strengthen our belief of the truth of the gospel, and the invisible glory and misery that is come. I am confident this work will exceedingly try the strength of our faith; for he that is superficially a Christian, and not sound in the faith, will likely feel his zeal quite fail him, especially when the duty becomes common, for want of a proper sense of the things which he is to treat of, to keep it alive. An affected fervency will not hold out in such duties long. The pulpit will have more of them than a conference with poor ignorant souls; for the pulpit is the hypocritical minister's stage. There, in the press, and in the public acts, where there is room for ostentation, you are sure to have his best, and almost all. It is other kind of men that must effectually do the work now in hand. (6.) It is therefore highly necessary that we prepare

ourselves for it by private prayer, and that we begin and end with a short prayer with our people. (7.) Carry on all, even the most earnest passages, in clear demonstrations of love to their souls, and make them feel through the whole that you aim at nothing but their salvation. (8.) If you have not time to deal so fully with each one in particular as is here directed, then omit not the most necessary parts; take several of them together that are friends, and will not seek to divulge each other's weaknesses, and speak to them in common as much as concerns all; only the examinations of their knowledge and state, and convictions of misery and special directions, must be used to the individuals alone: but take heed of slubbering it over, or being too brief without real necessity.

12. If God enable you, extend your charity to the poorest set before you let them go; give them something towards their relief, and for the time that is thus taken from their labours, especially for the encouragement of them that do best; and promise the rest as much when they have learned the catechism. I know you cannot give what you have not; but I speak to those who can. So much shall serve for directions to the younger ministers in their dealing with the more ignorant or carnal sort of persons.

CHAPTER VIII.

Directions how to deal with self-conceited opinionists—To prevent or cure error and schism in our people—And how to deal with those concerning whom we have cause both to hope and fear.

It is likely you will have some come to you who, when they should give an account of their faith, will fall into a contentious discourse. One will tell you that you have no true church, because you have such bad members; another will ask you by what authority you baptize infants; another will ask what scripture you have for praying and singing psalms in a

mixed assembly; and another will quarrel with you because you administer not the Lord's supper to them in the gesture and manner that they desire and were wont to receive it, or because you exercise any discipline among them. With such I should think it best to take this course :—

1. Let them know that this meeting is appointed for instructing the people in the principles of religion, and you think it very wrong to pervert it from that use; that as you durst not turn God's public worship on the Lord's day into vain and contentious disputings, so neither do you think it lawful to abuse these meetings to such purposes.

2. Let him know that you do not this to avoid any trial of the truth; and therefore that you will at any other fit season endeavour to give him full satisfaction, but on condition only that he will submit first to be instructed by you.

3. Desire him to give you some account of the principles in the catechism; and if he deny it, convince him before all of the iniquity of his course. (1.) In that it is the first principles that salvation most depends on; and therefore, being of greatest excellence and necessity, are first to be taken into consideration. (2.) In that it is the appointed business of this day. (3.) It is orderly to begin with fundamentals, because they bear up the rest which suppose them, flow from them, and cannot be understood without them. (4.) It is the note of a proud, vainglorious man, to make a flourish about lesser things, and yet either to be ignorant of the greater, or to scorn to give that account of his knowledge which the people whom he despises refuse not to give.

If he yield to you, ask him only such questions as are of great weight, and yet strain him up a little higher than you do the common people; and especially put him most on defining and distinguishing, or expounding some terms or sentences of Scripture. If they be sacramental controversies which he raises, tell him it is necessary you should be first agreed what

baptism and the Lord's supper are, before you dispute who should be baptized; and it is twenty to one he will not be able to tell you what the sacraments themselves are. A true definition of baptism or the Lord's supper is not so commonly given as is pretended.

4. If he discover his ignorance in the cases propounded, endeavour to humble him in the sense of his pride and presumption; and let him know what it is, and what it signifies, to go about with a contentious, proud behaviour, while he is indeed so ignorant in things of greater moment.

5. See that you be able to give him better information yourselves in the points wherein you find him ignorant.

6. Take care that you discern the spirit of the man; and if he be a settled, perverse schismatic, so that you see him peremptory and quite transported with pride, and have but little hopes of his recovery, then do all this that I have said openly before all that are present, that he may be humbled or shamed, and the rest confirmed. But if you find him godly and temperate, and that there is any hope of his reduction, then see that you do all this privately, between him and you only, and let not fall any bitter words that tend to his disparagement. And thus I advise, both because we must be as tender of the reputation of all good men as fidelity to them and the truth will permit; we must bear one another's burdens, and not increase them; and we must restore those with a spirit of meekness who fall through infirmity, remembering that we ourselves also may be tempted; and also because there is but little hope that you should ever do them any good, if once you exasperate them.

7. To such erring persons as you have any hopes of, be sure you carry yourselves with as much tenderness and love as is consistent with your duty to the church of God: for most of them, when they are once tainted this way, are so selfish and high-minded that they are much more impatient of reproof than many of the profaner sort of people.

Musculus took this method with the Baptists, visiting them in prison, and relieving them, even while they railed at him as antichristian; and so continued, without disputing with them, till they were convinced that he loved them; and then they sought to him for advice themselves, and many of them were reclaimed by him.

Having advised you what to do with such men in your work, I shall add a word or two of advice how you should behave towards them, and deal with them, at other times; because the preservation of the unity and peace of your congregations greatly depends on your rightly dealing with such as these. For, alas, it is most commonly men that profess to be more than usually religious in some particular way that are the dividers of the church of Christ.

1. I must premise that the chief part of your work to preserve the church from such consists in preventing their fall; for when they are once thoroughly infected, be the error what it will, they are seldom recovered. If beaten out of the error which they first fell into, they go to another, and perhaps from that to another; but seldom return to the truth.

2. It is most desirable that the minister should be of parts above the people, so far as to be able to teach and awe them, and manifest their weaknesses to themselves. It is greatly owing to ministers that our people run into so many factions, and particularly the weakness of too many is not the least cause. When a proud seducer has a nimble tongue, and a minister is dull or ignorant, so that such a one can baffle him, or play upon him in the ears of others, it brings him into contempt, and overthrows the weak; for they commonly judge him to have the best cause who has the most confident, plausible, triumphant tongue. But when a minister is able to open their shame to all, it greatly tends to preserve the church from all their infection.

3. Frequently and thoroughly possess your people with the nature, necessity, and daily use of the great

unquestionable and fundamental principles of religion, and of the great sin and danger of a perverse zeal about the lower points before the greater are well learned; and let them be made sensible that it is these principles, and not their smaller controversies, on which life or death depends.

4. Make them sensible of the mischief of schism, and the great and certain obligations that lie upon us all to maintain the church's unity and peace.

5. When a fire is kindled, resist it in the beginning, and make not light of the smallest spark; and therefore go presently to the infected person, and follow him by the means hereafter mentioned, till he be recovered.

6. Use a fit diversion. When a small controversy begins to endanger the church, raise a greater yourself, which you have better advantage to manage, and which is not likely to make a division; that is, let them know that there are far greater difficulties than theirs to be resolved, that they may be humbled in the sense of their ignorance, and their self-conceit thereby abated.

7. You must feed them not with milk only, but sometimes with stronger meat; for it exceedingly puffs them up with pride when they hear nothing from ministers but what they know already or can say themselves. This makes them think themselves as wise as you, and as fit to be teachers; for they think you know no more than you preach: and this has set so many of them on preaching, because they hear nothing from others but what they can say themselves; and ministers do not set them such patterns as may humble and deter them from that work. Not that I would have you overlook the great fundamental truths, or neglect the weak and ignorant people while you are dealing with these; but only when the main part of your sermons is as plain as you can speak, let a small part be such as shall puzzle these self-conceited men, that they may see they are yet but children who have need of milk, and that you would be

more upon those higher points, if they were capable of profiting by them.

8. See that you preach as little as may be against them in a direct manner, opposing their sect by name; for in general they are exceedingly tender, proud, passionate, and rash; and will but hate and fly from you as an enemy, and say you rail. The way therefore is, without naming them, to state those truths clearly and fully which must subvert their errors, and then the error will fall of itself: and when you are necessitated to deal with them directly, do it not by short, unsatisfactory applications, or irritating reproaches; but, without naming them, take up the controversy, and handle it thoroughly, mildly, and convincingly; yet do not dwell too long upon it: but give them your full evidence in a few sermons, not saying all that might be said, but choosing out that which they can have least pretence to quarrel with.

9. Be sure to keep up private meetings, draw them in among you, and manage them prudently. By this means you may keep them from dividing meetings among themselves, where they are at liberty to say what they please without control; for most professors are addicted to private meetings, which, when well ordered, are of great use to their edification; and if they have not the opportunity of such as they should have, they will attend such as they should not. In these meetings observe the following things:—(1.) Be sure to be always with them yourselves. (2.) Let not the main exercises of the meeting be such as tend to contention, or for particular persons to show their parts, but such as tend to the edification of the people; not for private men to preach or expound Scripture, nor to let every one speak to questions of their own proposing; but to repeat the sermons which you have preached, to call upon God, and sing his praise. (3.) Yet let there be some opportunity for them to speak, in order to learn. To this purpose, when you have done repeating, let all that are present know, if they doubt of any thing that has been delivered, or

would have any thing made more plain to them, or would be resolved in any thing else that concerns the subject in hand, you desire them to state their doubts: and so let them have the liberty of inquiring as learners, while you remain the teachers, and resolve all the doubts yourselves, and do not set them on disputing, by leaving it to them to make the answer. (4.) If you perceive them so exercising their own parts that they are likely to divide if they have not opportunity to do it, be not too stiff against them; but mildly tell them it is for their good that you dislike it, both because it is a sign of a proud heart, that had rather teach than learn, especially where a teacher by office is in the place, and where there is no necessity; and also because you fear it will not tend to the edification of the flock, but to vain janglings, or to excite others who are unfit for the work to imitate them. Inquire also whether they have any truth of God to reveal to the people that you do not reveal. If they have not, why should they desire needlessly to tell them what they are daily told by you? If they have, it is necessary that you know and consider it before you consent it should be taught to your flock. But if this mild resistance satisfy not, let them take their course a while, rather than separate from you, unless they be already perverse and subtle heretics; and when they have done their exercises, tell them that as you give liberty to all to propose their doubts about what you have delivered, so you must take the same liberty that you give. Ask them, first, whether the people are more likely to be edified by having such variety obtruded upon them, or by fastening well in their memories the things they have lately heard; and whether such exercises or repetitions are most necessary: and then open the weaknesses of their discourse, the misexpounding of scriptures, the errors in matter, in method, and in words; and that not in a contemptuous way, but as the points concerning which you remain unsatisfied. By such means as

these you will quickly make them ashamed of their way, and recover them from it.

10. Make use of your people's parts to the utmost, as your helpers, in an orderly way, under your own direction, or else they will make use of them in a disorderly and dividing way, in opposition to you. One great cause of schism has been, ministers contemptuously crying down private men's preaching, and at the same time not willing to make any use of the gifts which God has bestowed on such for their assistance. They have thrust them too far from holy things, as if they were a profane generation. The work is likely to go poorly on, if there be no hands employed in it but the minister's. God does not give any of his gifts to be buried, but for common use. By a prudent improvement of the gifts of the more able Christians we may receive much help, and prevent their abuse. The uses you must especially put them to are these: (1.) Urge them to be diligent in teaching and praying with their own families, especially catechising them and teaching them the meaning of what they learn, and setting it home upon their affections; and there, if they have a mind to preach to their children and servants, so they undertake no more than they are able to do, I know no reason why they may not. (2.) Urge them to step out now and then to their poor ignorant neighbours, and catechise and instruct them in meekness and patience from day to day; and that will bring them more peace of conscience than contemning them. (3.) Urge them to go often to the impenitent and scandalous sinners about them, and deal with them with all possible skill and earnestness, yet also with love and patience, for the purpose of converting, reforming, and saving their souls. (4.) Acquaint them with their duty of watching over each other in brotherly love, admonishing and exhorting one another daily; and if any walk scandalously, to tell them their fault before two or three, after the contempt of private reproof; and if that prevail not, to tell the officers of the church, that they may be pro-

ceeded with as Christ has appointed. (5.) At your private meetings, and on days of humiliation or thanksgiving in private, employ them in prayer. (6.) If there be any very ignorant or scandalous sinners that you know of, and you cannot possibly have time yourselves to speak to them at that season, send some of those who are able and sober, to instruct the ignorant and to admonish the offenders, as far as a private man on a message from a minister, and in discharge of his own duty, may go. (7.) Let some of them be chosen to represent the church; and be their agents to prepare all cases of discipline for public audience, and to be present with the church officers at appointed meetings, to hear the evidences that are brought in against scandalous, impenitent sinners; and to discern how far they are valid, and how far the persons are obliged to make satisfaction, and give public testimony of repentance, or to be farther proceeded against. (8.) Let such as are fit be made subservient officers, I mean deacons; and then they may afford you help in a regular way, and will, by their relation, feel themselves obliged to maintain the unity of the church, and authority of the ministry, as they have some participation of the employment and honour; and so by a complication of interests you will make them firmer to the church: but then, see that they be men fit for the place.

I am persuaded, had ministers thus made use of the parts of their ablest members, they might have prevented many of the divisions, and distractions, and apostacies that have befallen us; for they would have then found work enough upon their hands for higher parts than theirs, without invading the ministry, and would have seen cause to bewail their want of abilities for that work which properly belongs to them. Experience would have convinced and humbled them more than our words can do. See that you stir them up to diligence in these works, and let them know what a sin it is to neglect their families, and their ignorant, miserable neighbours; and then they will be

kept humble, and have no mind to engage in other work, when they find you spurring them on to that which is properly their own, and rebuking them for the neglect of it; nor will they have any leisure, because of the constancy and greatness of their employment.

11. Still keep up Christian love and familiarity with them even when they have begun to warp; and lose not your interest in them while you have any thoughts of attempting their recovery.

12. If they withdraw into separate meetings, follow them, and be among them, if it may be, continually. Enter a mild protest against the lawfulness of those meetings; but yet tell them that you are willing to hear what they have to say, and to be among them for their good, if they will give you leave, lest they run to farther evil; and be not easily removed, but hold on, unless they absolutely exclude you.

13. Let not the authors of the schism outdo you in any thing that is good; for as truth should be more effectual for sanctification than error, so if you give them this advantage, you give them the day; and all your disputation will signify very little: for many judge only by the outward appearance and the effects, and are not able to judge of the doctrine itself. They think that he has the best cause whom they take to be the best man.

I extend this rule both to doctrine and life. If a libertine preach up free grace, do you preach it up more effectually; be much upon it, and make it more glorious on right grounds than he can do on wrong. If he magnify the grace of love, and in order to cry down fear and humiliation, be all for living in pure love to God; do not contradict him, but outgo him, and preach up the love of God, with its motives and effects, more fully and effectually than he can do on the corrupt grounds on which he proceeds. Otherwise all the silly people will believe that this is the difference between you—that he is for free grace and the love of God, and you are against it. So if an enthusiast

talk of the Holy Ghost, and the light, and witness, and law within us; fall you upon that subject too, and preach up the office of the Holy Ghost, his indwelling and operations, the light, and testimony, and law within us, better than they do. This is the most effectual way of preserving your people from seduction. So if one who is for private men preaching come and inveigh against ministers for inhibiting them to use the gifts of God for the edification of the church, I would not immediately thwart him; but rather persuade private men to use their gifts in all the ways that I have just now mentioned, and sharply chide them for not using them more; and then, among my cautions, or reprehensions, touch upon his desired abuse in the end. What I have said by way of example in these few points I mean in all others. Preaching truth is the most successful way of confuting error; and I would have no seducer to have the glory of outgoing us in any good, or in defending any truth.

You should be as careful that they shall not outgo you in the practice of a holy and righteous life, as in sound and diligent teaching. Do they express a hatred of sin, and desire for church reformation? So must we more abundantly. Do they spend their time when they meet together in holy discourse, and not in vain janglings? Let us do so much more. Are they unwearied in propagating their opinions? Let us be more so in propagating the truth. Do they condescend to the meanest, and creep into houses to lead captive the silliest of the flock? Let us stoop as low, and be as diligent to do them good. Are they loving to their party, and contemners of the world? Let us be lovers of all, and do good to all, according to our power, and especially to the household of faith, and love an enemy as well as they can do a friend. Let us be more just than they, more merciful, more humble, more meek and patient; for this is the will of God, that by well-doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Let us excel them in a

holy, harmless, righteous, merciful, fruitful, heavenly life, as we do in soundness of doctrine; that by our fruits we may be known, and the weaker sort of our people may see the truth when thus reflected, who cannot see it in itself; and that our light may so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven; and that even those who obey not the word, may, without the word, be won by the conversation of their teachers.

Three sorts of persons that we may meet with in our work of personal instruction have already been considered:—(1.) The ignorant and unconverted. (2.) The doubting, troubled believer. (3.) The cavilling opinionist, or seduced schismatic. The fourth sort of whom I should speak in this direction are, those who by a professed willingness to learn and obey, and by other signs give us some reason to think that they are penitent, and have a measure of faith; and yet by their ignorance and lukewarmness, or for want of a more steady walk, cause our fears to be as great or greater than our hopes, so that we are between hope and fear of them, doubting the worst of their present safety, though we have not sufficient ground to charge them with being impenitent, unconverted persons. I think half of those who come to me are of this sort. Now it may be a great difficulty with some younger ministers what they should do with this sort of people, where there is no sufficient ground to determine of them as godly or ungodly, whatever their fears or hopes may be. With regard to such I shall only say this:—

1. The first directions may suffice in the main for dealing with these, and are as much fitted to them as to the worst: for, as we may tell a notorious sinner, "Your case is miserable; you are a child of death;" so may we tell these, "I much fear your case is sad; these are ill signs; I wonder how you dare thus hazard your salvation." And so abating of the confidence and severity of our censures according to the several degrees of hopeful good that appear in them.

2. I would advise you to be very cautious how you pass hasty or absolute censures on any that you have to do with; because it is not so easy a matter to discern a man to be certainly destitute of real religion, who professes himself a Christian, as many imagine it to be: and you may do the work in hand as well without such an absolute conclusion as with it.

3. The general description of the ministerial work may supply the rest. I shall therefore only add:—(1.) Keep them close to the use of private and public means. (2.) Be often with the lukewarm to awaken them, and with the careless to admonish them. (3.) Take the opportunity of sickness, which will bow their hearts and open their ears. (4.) See that they spend the Lord's day and order their families aright. (5.) Draw them from temptations and occasions of sin. (6.) Charge them to come and seek help in all great straits, and open their temptations and dangers before they are swallowed up. (7.) Strike at the great radical sins: self-seeking, earthly-mindedness, sensuality, pride, and infidelity. Keep them to read the Scripture and good books, and direct them to those that are most likely to affect and rouse them. (8.) Engage their godly neighbours to have an eye upon them. (9.) Keep up discipline to awe them. (10.) Maintain the life of grace in your own souls, that it may appear in all your sermons to them; that every one who comes cold to the assembly may be warmed and quickened before he departs.

Thus I have finished my advice, and leave you to practise it.

THE END.

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